

“I’m Not Looking for Mr. Right, Just Mr. Right Now”: Men  
Clients of Men Escorts

by

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## **Abstract**

In 2014, Canada's prostitution laws underwent legal reform. The new legal regime criminalized, among other things, the purchase of a sexual service. Arguably, because their existence challenges the underlying rationale of the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act, men sex workers and their clients have been excluded from the conversation. Moreover, there is a glaring gap in the literature in terms of men's experiences hiring men sex workers. This thesis therefore sought to examine men clients' motivations, experiences, and relationships with men escorts, by speaking with clients directly, drawing upon ten in-depth one-on-one interviews with men who self-identified as clients of men escorts. This thesis, divided into three findings chapters, explores the commercial sexual exchange, risks and their management, and stigma and identity, from the perspectives of men who hire men escorts. The first findings chapter, "Setting the Stage: The Commercial Sexual Exchange," details the advantages of hiring an escort, how the men set up an encounter, their experience of the commercial sexual encounter, and their relationships with escorts. The next chapter, "Clients Speak of Navigating and Negotiating Risk," moves the conversation beyond sexual health risks (extensively addressed in the literature) to consider other risks navigated by men who hire men escorts. The final findings chapter, "Stigma, Stereotypes, Social Judgment, and Identity Management," draws on Goffman to examine the men's perceptions of stigma, experiences of social judgment, stigma in the gay community, and the ways in which the men negotiate their private identities. This thesis highlights the diversity of clients and their experiences, and draws attention to the complexity of their relationships with escorts.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Chapter Two: The Literature on the Clients of Sex Workers: Exploiters? Deviants? Vectors of Disease? Service Consumers? .....	9
Chapter Three: Methods and Methodology .....	32
Chapter Four: Setting the Stage: The Commercial Sexual Exchange .....	42
Chapter Five: Clients Speak of Navigating and Negotiating Risk .....	64
Chapter Six: Stigma, Stereotypes, Social Judgment, and Identity Management .....	82
Chapter Seven: Conclusion .....	98
Works, Legislation, and Judicial Cases Cited .....	102
Appendix A .....	111
Appendix B .....	112
Appendix C .....	116

# Chapter One

## Introduction

On June 4th, 2014, Justice Minister Peter Mackay introduced Bill C-36, which, among other things, criminalized the purchase of a sexual service, essentially rendering prostitution itself illegal for the first time in Canadian history. MacKay asserted that these new laws would “protect those who are most vulnerable by going after the perpetrators, the perverts, those who are consumers of this degrading practice” (Mackay 2014). He further elaborated, “we are specifically targeting [...] Johns, perpetrators, pimps, those who are exploiting vulnerable women.” Throughout the press conference, MacKay promoted the simplistic view that sex workers are ‘exploited women and girls’ and that their clients are ‘evil men who exploit women’. After answering a series of questions at a press conference about the Bill, a reporter asked a question that others were undoubtedly asking themselves: “What about male prostitutes?” whose very existence, of course, challenges the framework that Mackay put forward. As the reporter attempted to further explain her question, Mackay cut her off, saying “I’m sorry I have to go,” before leaving abruptly and without warning (Mackay 2014).

Over the last several years, Canada’s prostitution laws have undergone legal reform through a process which largely excluded men sex workers and increasingly

vilified the clients of sex workers. At the time the men in this research were interviewed, the *Bedford*<sup>1</sup> case, which challenged three key provisions of Canada's prostitution laws, was in its infancy and prostitution in Canada was governed by Sections 210(1), 210(2), 212(1), and 213(1) of the Canadian *Criminal Code*. Section 210(1) made it an indictable offence to keep a common bawdy house, a place used for the purpose of prostitution or acts of indecency. This law had the effect of criminalizing indoor sex workers, escort agency/massage parlour owners, and incall operators. Section 210(2) made it a summary offence to be an inmate of, or to be 'found in' a common bawdy house, which criminalized sex workers who worked from a fixed location and their clients, targeting the incall sector of the sex industry. Section 212(1) criminalized living "wholly or in part on the avails of prostitution of another person," targeting those who had professional or personal relationships with sex workers. Finally, section 213(1), which primarily functioned to target street-based sex workers and their clients, criminalized communicating for the purpose of prostitution in a public place or within public view (summary offence).

On December 20th, 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously ruled that the challenged provisions of the Canadian *Criminal Code* were unconstitutional because they violate sex workers' right to liberty and security of person, guaranteed under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The nine Justices of the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously ruled that the laws put sex workers at risk of violence by inhibiting

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis, I will be referring to the *Bedford* case which entails three court rulings: *Bedford v. Canada*, 2010 ONSC 4264; *Canada (Attorney General) v. Bedford*, 2012 ONCA 186; and *Canada (Attorney General) v. Bedford*, 2013 SCC 72, [2013] 3 S.C.R. 1101. The constitutional challenge to three key provisions of Canada's prostitution laws was brought forward by three current and former women sex workers in Ontario: Terri-Jean Bedford, Valerie Scott, and Amy Lebovitch.

their ability to take steps which increase their safety, such as screening clients and hiring security guards. The declaration of invalidity was suspended for one year, giving the government the option to introduce new legislation that would be constitutional. On December 6th, 2014, the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* became law in Canada. The new prostitution laws criminalize selling sex at or next to a school, playground, or daycare center (CC s. 213.1), materially benefiting from the sale of a sexual service (CC s. 286.2), advertising a sexual service (CC s. 286.4), and purchasing a sexual service (CC s. 286.1).

Under the former prostitution laws, clients who solicited sex workers in a public place, including the relative privacy of their own vehicle, were vulnerable to arrest under Section 213(1) of the Canadian *Criminal Code*, and clients who visited sex workers indoors at an incall location were at risk of being charged under Section 210(2). With the introduction of the new prostitution laws, which have yet to be interpreted by the courts, the clients of sex workers are liable to face criminal charges under all circumstances.

Notwithstanding that the Government of Canada's own research has shown that Canadians have diverse opinions on how sex work should be regulated<sup>2</sup> and that the traditional view that selling and purchasing sex should be illegal because it is immoral no longer resonates with most Canadians (Department of Justice 2015), the

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<sup>2</sup> The Harper Government commissioned \$175,000 for a poll that would investigate Canadians' opinions on how prostitution should be regulated. Justice Minister Peter Mackay opposed the release of the findings, and the survey results reveal why he may have been reluctant. While Conservatives at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights suggested that Canadians are opposed to prostitution, the poll results reveal that Canadians are very much divided on the issue (Casey 2014). CBC reported on June 2nd, 2014 that "a majority of people who responded to a Justice Department online survey on prostitution earlier this year felt that purchasing sexual services should be a criminal offence. However, two-thirds of them said selling sex should not be an offence. A majority also said that benefiting economically from the prostitution of an adult should be illegal" (Canadian Press 2 June 2014).

Conservative government chose to legislate morality under the guise of 'protecting women and girls from evil bad man'. Arguably, they re-packaged a repressive agenda to appeal to progressive Canadians' support of gender equality. Joy Smith, a Conservative Member of Parliament for the Kildonan - St. Paul region, argued that Canada's prostitution laws should ensure that "predators remain strongly sanctioned and prostituted women and girls are not criminalized" (Kennedy 2014). Throughout Canada's prostitution law reform, sex workers were portrayed as vulnerable women and victims without agency, while their clients were vilified as perverts and predators who lack empathy and who wish to exploit women and girls for their own pleasure.

In terms of the current study, it is worth noting that these gendered discourses serve to invisibilize men sex workers and their clients. The clients of men sex workers are generally absent from policy discussions because they are assumed to be deviant (Whomwell 2010) and because their very existence challenges the framework that sex work is violence against women. Tyler Megarry, representing RÉZO's sex worker program in Montreal which offers services to men sex workers who provide their services to other men, suggested at the Senate hearings on Bill C-36 that men sex workers are left out of these discussion because they "don't fit the ideal image of a victim" (Senate Hearing 11 Sept 2014).

The trope that the clients of sex workers are dangerous predators reflects the changing view of men who purchase sexual services. The 'taint' of sex work historically stigmatized sex workers, while men who purchased their services were viewed perhaps as "exhibiting poor judgment," but not as 'deviant' (Egan 2006, p.4). Goffman (1963) wrote that a stigmatized person is discredited and is perceived to possess "a failing, a

shortcoming, or a handicap” (p. 3) that makes them “not quite human” (p. 5), and they are “reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (p. 3). Egan (2006) argues that “customers have faced less ridicule and stigmatization due to discourses of masculinity that foreground a proliferative male sex drive” (p. 4).

Over the last decade, the stigma of the sex industry has been shifting from the seller to the buyer (Bernstein 2007). Thus, the prevailing rhetoric has come to echo the radical feminist understanding of sex workers as ‘victims’ rather than as ‘criminals’ and the belief that pornography and prostitution are the result of patriarchy – reflecting, reinforcing, and reproducing of gender inequality.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, they have drawn attention to the clients of sex workers, and vilified them as predators who abuse and exploit vulnerable women and girls (Farley et al. 2012, Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008, Farley 2007). Farley (2007) captures the narrative well: “The word trick refers to the multitude of ways that men trick women into performing more or different acts of sexual exploitation than the men pay for, or the way that men sexually exploit women in prostitution and then refuse to pay, cheating or tricking the women. Other words for them might be sex predators” (p. 5).<sup>4</sup> When academics and politicians who perpetuate these discourses acknowledge male sex workers at all, they refer exclusively to adolescent boys (Prousalidis 2013, Farley 2007).

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<sup>3</sup> This debate is documented by Khan (2014) in relation to s/m (sodomasochism).

<sup>4</sup> It is notable that in this quote Farley is appropriating the term “trick” which was coined by sex workers to suggest that men were being “tricked” into paying them for sex.

Today, the prevailing narratives construct the clients of sex workers not only as ‘dangerous men’ but also as ‘pathetic losers’ who “feel uncomfortable around women, unattractive to women, and rejected by women” (Joseph and Black 2012, p. 486, see also Egan 2006). While historically the actions of sex workers’ clients were seen as outside of criminal law, with the introduction of the new prostitution laws, this has changed which, for the first time, explicitly criminalized the purchase of a sexual service (CC s. 286.1). In a time when Canada has criminalized the clients of sex workers, it is essential that we understand their motivations and their relationships with sex workers. Researchers and politicians have little interest in men sex workers, and even less so in their clients. For example, the factums submitted in *Bedford*, the Parliamentary hearings on Bill C-36, and the preamble to the new laws conceptualize sex workers as women and girls and their clients as men – men sex workers and their clients are simply excluded from the conversation. My research has sought to uncover men clients’ experiences of hiring escorts, their relationships with escorts, and how such relationships play out in their lives. Among other things, I will consider how hiring men as opposed to women escorts conditions clients’ experiences.

Given the (somewhat) surprising lack of scholarship that interviews the men clients of men sex workers directly (rather than gathering information from sex workers about their clients), I will survey the literature on the clients of women sex workers and research on men sex work to contextualize my findings. Chapter 2, “The Literature on the Clients of Sex Workers: Exploiters? Deviants? Vectors of Disease? Service Consumers?,” presents the research that conceptualizes clients as dangerous men who exploit women, as well as literature that examines sex work as an income-generating

activity. I then proceed to detail my methodology in Chapter 3, “Methods and Methodology,” including my choice to pursue in-depth semi-structured interviews, and to interview clients directly. This thesis, based on ten interviews with men who self-identified as clients of men escorts, provides a rare glimpse into the experiences and interactions of men who hire men escorts from their own perspectives. As such, it is their voices that are foregrounded throughout.

The results of my research will be covered in three chapters. My first findings chapter, “Setting the Stage: The Commercial Sexual Exchange,” will detail why the men report that they hire escorts, how they set up a session, what takes place during an encounter, and their relationships with escorts. This chapter challenges dominant narratives about clients’ motivations to hire sex workers, and speaks to a spectrum of relationships between escorts and their clients. While the literature on men sex work is dominated by the risk of transmitting HIV, my second findings chapter, “Clients Speak of Navigating and Negotiating Risks,” will discuss the wide range of risks that participants highlighted including sexual health, financial, security, legal, and emotional well-being. I will detail the men’s risk management strategies, and demonstrate that, like sex workers, criminalization and stigma may render clients vulnerable to predators. In the final findings chapter, “Stigma, Stereotypes, Social Judgment, and Identity Management,” I will explore the men’s perceptions of stigma, experiences of social judgment, how such perceptions and experiences ‘play out’ in the gay community, the ways in which participants would manage their public identity, and how they would negotiate their private identity. In this chapter, I conclude that, in resisting dominant narratives, clients ironically reproduce the very stereotypes they are challenging. The

thesis concludes with reflections on the way criminalization and stigma similarly impact the experiences of both sex workers and their clients, the ways in which gender and sexual identity may condition clients' experiences, and areas for future research.

## Chapter Two

### **The Literature on the Clients of Sex Workers: Exploiters? Deviants? Vectors of Disease? Service Consumers?**

Given that men sex workers comprise a robust 20-25% of sex workers (Canada 2006) it is shocking that so little research examines men's experiences paying men for sex. When one encounters a significant gap in research literature, it is a challenge to identify related scholarship that helps us to make sense of the issue in question. I therefore turn to the literature on the men clients of women sex workers, and on male sex work, to gain insight. The literature on the clients of women sex workers allows us to consider how gender shapes interactions between sex workers and their clients, and scholarship on male sex work helps us to understand the context in which men hire escorts. In this chapter, I will begin by exploring the literature on the clients of women sex workers from two perspectives — sex work as violence against women, and sex work as an income generating activity. I will then proceed to discuss the literature on male sex work, and the extremely limited research on men clients of men sex workers, which has mostly been gathered by interviewing sex workers about their clients.

#### **The "Debate" Within Sex Work Scholarship**

It is well established that sex workers experience unacceptably high levels of violence and exploitation (Lowman 2001), yet what is fiercely debated is whether this is inherent to the sex industry or the consequence of particular social conditions surrounding sex work in given contexts. These two opposing positions are the foundations of two of the three key discourses and research on sex work. The first position holds that sex work is inherently violent and exploitative, is a symptom of patriarchy, and exacerbates women's inequality (Farley et al. 2012, Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Farley 2007, Durchslag and Goswami 2008). Those who hold this position advocate for the abolishment of the sex industry, generally through criminal laws that target those who purchase sexual services and third parties who provide services to sex workers (e.g. escort agency owners, security/drivers, etc.). Sex work is therefore investigated as violence against women.

The second position approaches sex work as work and asserts that sex workers' vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and poor labour practices is the result of social conditions (i.e. criminalization and stigma) (Atchison, Vukmirovich, and Burnett 2015, Kolar, Atchison, and Bungay 2014, Jones 2013, Gysin and Gysin 2013, Joseph and Black 2012, Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Pettinger 2011, Pruitt and Krull 2011, Atchison 2010, Sanders 2008a, Bernstein 2007, Earle and Sharp 2007, Lowman and Atchison 2006, Pitts et al. 2004, Bernstein 2001, Jordan 1997, Plumridge et al. 1997, Armstrong 1978). These scholars argue that through the decriminalization of sex work and challenging the stigma associated with the sex industry, sex workers can work in safety and in dignity. Sex work is therefore researched as an income-generating activity, and,

using labour theory, these scholars investigate sex work as work, albeit one that is criminalized and stigmatized.

The third discourse on sex work, one that is largely absent from research on the sex industry, is that sex work is immoral because, among other things, it undermines the sanctity of the family and should therefore be criminalized. This position is prevalent in the public and political conversation but largely absent from academic inquiry (Christian Legal Fellowship, Catholic Civil Rights League and REAL Women of Canada, *Factum submitted in Canada (Attorney General) v. Bedford*, 2013 SCC 72, [2013] 3 S.C.R. 1101).

Research on the sex industry has traditionally focused on women sex workers, ignoring men who provide sexual services and, of course, the other side of the exchange (i.e. clients) (Sanders 2008b). This is presumably in part due to the fact that women who sell sex have traditionally been constructed as deviant, whereas men who purchase sex from women have been understood to simply conform to normative gender expectations and male sexual scripts (Egan 2006). In recent years, prohibitionist feminists, who view sex work as a symptom of women's inequality, have advocated for criminal penalties for purchasing sexual services, the so-called 'Swedish Model'.<sup>5</sup> As the stigma of sex work began shifting from the seller to the buyer (Bernstein 2007), researchers, politicians, and activists developed a keener interest in the men clients of women sex workers.

### **Research on the Men Clients of Women Sex Workers - Sex Work as Violence**

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<sup>5</sup> In 1999, the Swedish government chose to interpret sex work as violence against women and enacted legislation which criminalized the purchase but not the sale of sex.

There is a body of literature which examines the men clients of women sex workers from the position that sex work is inherently violent and exploitative, and which characterizes the relationships between sex workers and their clients as an act of domination in which the client holds (and often enjoys holding) power over the sex worker (Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008, Farley 2007). These researchers have found that participants speak of the women whose sexual services they purchase in a dehumanizing manner and refer to them as objects (Farley et al. 2012, Farley et al. 2011b, Durchslag and Goswami 2008, Farley 2007). In addition, they report that many participants admit to committing violent, “sexually coercive,” and/or “sexually aggressive” acts against women including those who are sex workers (Farley et al. 2012, Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Durchslag and Goswami 2008).

This body of literature has explored the attitudes of men clients of women sex workers and found that they articulate a sense of entitlement towards sex with women (Durchslag and Goswami 2008); view purchasing sex as “right [*sic*] of passage,” or a validation of their masculinity (Farley et al. 2012, Durchslag and Goswami 2008); and express hostility towards women, sometimes through the use of misogynistic language (Farley et al. 2011b, Farley 2007). Some participants reported that sex workers cannot be raped or that sex workers give up their right to say ‘no’ (Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008, Farley 2007).

In addition to asserting power and dominance, these researchers have found that many men hire sex workers to be free from the commitments and responsibilities that accompany traditional sexual relationships (Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b,

Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008). Clients, in these researches, reported a lack of emotional connection with the sex workers whose services they purchased (Farley et al. 2012, Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2007), expressed that they view sex work as being physically and psychologically damaging to women (Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008, Farley 2007), and demonstrated a lack of empathy towards sex workers (Farley et al. 2012, Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Farley 2007). Somewhat surprisingly, in light of the latter point, participants reported feeling guilty, regretful, and/or ashamed after purchasing sex (Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Durchslag and Goswami 2008, Farley 2007). For the most part, this body of literature concludes with recommendations to deter men from purchasing sex from women such as criminal penalties and public shaming, based on what their research participants said would deter them (Farley et al. 2012, Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008).

### **Research on the Men Clients of Women Sex Workers - Sex Work as an Income-Generating Activity**

By contrast, the body of literature which explores men clients and their relationships with women sex workers from the point of departure that sex work is an income-generating activity, challenges many of the findings of those who view sex work as inherently violent and exploitative. Research from this perspective has historically been limited to studies that interviewed sex workers about their clients (rather than speaking with clients themselves) (Boyle 1994, Armstrong 1978). Over the last two decades or so, a small body of literature has emerged in which data is gathered from clients directly through interviews (Jones 2013, Gysin and Gysin 2013, Sanders 2008a,

Bernstein 2007, Bernstein 2001, Jordan 1997, Plumridge et al. 1997) and interviewer-administered or self-administered surveys (Kolar, Atchison, and Bungay 2014, Atchison, Vukmirovich, and Burnett 2015, Joseph and Black 2012, Atchison 2010, Lowman and Atchison 2006, Pitts et al. 2004). The advent of the Internet facilitated the emergence of review boards where sex workers advertise, clients review sex workers, and both sides of the exchange discuss various aspects of the sex industry. As a result of this development in the organization of sex work, clients are now a more visible population (Jones 2013). Some researchers have taken advantage of this new source of data by conducting research on the men clients of women sex workers by analyzing their online posts and discussions (Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Pettinger 2011, Pruitt and Krull 2011, Earle and Sharp 2007).

Much research has focused on the question of 'why' men pay for sex. While this question problematically starts from the assumption that to do so is 'deviant' and therefore worthy of investigation, it is also important to consider if, as some researchers have asserted, the primary motivations for men to hire women sex workers are to assert power, exercise dominance, and commit acts of violence (Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008, Farley 2007).

Scholarship over the last twenty years has found that men hire sex workers for mental health reasons, such as to relieve negative emotions (e.g. stress, loneliness, despair) (Jones 2013, Gysin and Gysin 2013, Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Jordan 1997); for conversation, companionship, and emotional support (Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Sanders 2008a, Pitts et al. 2004, Jordan 1997); glamour (Jones 2013); and adrenaline, excitement, or entertainment (Jones 2013, Pitts et al. 2004).

Perhaps counter-intuitively, the mention of physical/sexual pleasure does not dominate clients' explanations of why they hire sex workers (Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Pitts et al. 2004, Plumridge et al. 1997, Jordan 1997), and clients tend to prioritize emotional and physical intimacy in their narratives (Jones 2013, Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Sanders 2008a, Jordan 1997). Consistent with the findings of Farley et al. (2011a) (see also Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008), researchers have found that while many clients experience emotional involvement with the sex workers they hire (Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Sanders 2008a, Plumridge et al. 1997), other clients spoke of hiring sex workers specifically to avoid emotional involvement (Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Jordan 1997), although the scholars do not flag this as indicative of a lack of empathy for sex workers.

Many studies have shown that clients seek the simplicity of paid experiences by hiring sex workers and thereby avoiding the commitment and responsibility of maintaining a conventional relationship (Jones 2013, Joseph and Black 2012, Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Pitts et al. 2004, Jordan 1997, Plumridge et al. 1997). Participants in Plumridge et al.'s (1997) study assert that "payment of money discharges all larger obligations associated with relationships" (p. 165).

Sanders (2008a), found that "commercial sexual relationships can mirror the traditional romance, courtship rituals, modes and meanings of communication, sexual familiarity, mutual satisfaction and emotional intimacies found in 'ordinary' relationships" (p. 400) and she argues that there are "false dichotomies between commercial and non-commercial relationships" (p. 400). Her finding "challenges the status of commercial sex as 'deviant' and vastly different from other forms of

relationships” (p. 411) and her research calls into question embedded assumptions and pushes us to rethink the meaning of the exchange. For example, in her sample of 50 men clients, 28 “described themselves as currently a ‘regular’ client of one sex worker or more” (p. 404). Sanders (2008a) defines a regular client as someone who “visits the same sex worker (sometimes several sex workers) and builds up some form of relationship over time” (p. 404). While some clients actively seek to become a 'regular' client, others prefer the variety of hiring different sex workers (Joseph and Black 2012, Jordan 1997, Plumridge et al. 1997). Clients are more likely to become emotionally involved when they hire the same sex worker regularly (Jordan 1997).

Research has also uncovered that while many clients actively seek to become emotionally involved with the sex workers they hire, others unexpectedly find themselves in an emotionally close relationship. Milrod and Weitzer (2012) found that “a significant portion of clients initially visit escorts with no desire for or expectations of nonsexual intimacy” (p. 464) and are required to participate in emotion work for which they are unprepared when the relationship becomes unexpectedly close. For some clients, “moving toward an unfettered romantic relationship” is welcomed and for others it is met with anxiety and confusion as to whether the worker’s feelings are authentic (Milrod and Weitzer 2012, p. 458). These deepening feelings pose a risk that they will be emotionally hurt, or make life changes (e.g. leaving their significant other) only to find that their feelings are not truly reciprocated. One research participant noted “it can be very hard to determine which is an Oscar-winning GFE performance or something more genuine” (Milrod and Weitzer 2012, p. 460). When the relationship would become ‘too

close for comfort', clients would set boundaries or consider breaking off the relationship (Milrod and Weitzer 2012).

In addition to the potential risk of unanticipated and unwanted emotional entanglement, there were other risks identified in the literature. These include the risk of arrest (Jones 2013, Atchison 2010), discovery or 'outing' (Jones 2013, Atchison 2010), victimization, including physical assault, robbery, theft, or not receiving services paid for (Jones 2013, Atchison 2010, Lowman and Atchison 2006), and sexually transmitted infections (Jones 2013). It is important to note that some of these identified risks emerged organically from participants (see for example Jones 2013), while others were imposed by the researcher (see for example Atchison 2010, Lowman and Atchison 2006). Alternately, Jordan (1997) suggests that hiring a sex worker can be a risk management strategy for some clients. Participants in Jordan's (1997) study reported that hiring a sex worker was less risky than an affair in terms of discovery, and that it was less likely to disrupt their marriage (p. 60).

While the issue of risk, including the risk of emotional entanglement, features prominently in the literature, research suggests that this is not a significant preoccupation for clients. We now turn to consider the meaning of the purchase, examining the literature that troubles the finding (of researchers who assume sex work to be inherently violent and exploitative) that men who hire women sex workers lack empathy for them and have no interest in their pleasure or well-being (Farley et al. 2012, Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Farley 2007, Durchslag and Goswami 2008).

Most clients do not see themselves as purchasing a sexual act or a person (Jones 2013, Milrod and Weitzer 2012), and some use language to describe the transaction such as 'session' or 'appointment' that is consistent with the purchase of other personal services (e.g. therapy, skills coaching) (Jones 2013). Others perceive themselves to be paying for a relationship (Milrod and Weitzer 2012). Similarly, participants in Plumridge et al.'s (1997) research used 'relationship terms' to describe their experiences with sex workers, expressed no enjoyment in force or coercion, and did not see themselves as purchasing power over a woman's body.

In fact, a significant finding of Sanders (2008a) that is mirrored in other sex work research (Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Jordan et al. 1997, Plumridge et al. 1997) is that a mutually satisfying experience is often very important to clients. In the context of the proliferation of the service sector (Standing 2011), Bernstein (2007) argues that sexual labour today "resides in the provision" of what she calls "bounded authenticity," defined as "the sale and purchase of authentic emotional and physical connection" (p. 103). Milrod and Weitzer (2012) define "bounded authenticity" as "genuine but limited sexual and emotional experience, whereby the client's perception of intimacy is real but restricted by temporal and financial parameters" (p. 454).

While many clients are adamant that their pleasure is dependent upon the pleasure of the sex worker they hire (Sanders 2008a), they often recognize the performative aspects of the experience (e.g. that sex workers feign interest and engagement) and reported, in Jordan's (1997) research that "even a faked response was experienced as preferable to a mechanical one" (p. 68). Similarly, Milrod and Weitzer (2012) found that while clients acknowledge that the appearance of mutual

pleasure may be 'an illusion', they desire a credible illusion, and Pettinger (2011) found that clients of sex workers define the “feminised ‘good worker’” “as professional when they disguise the market transaction” (p. 223). Milrod and Weitzer (2012) also found that some clients were convinced that there are no performative elements to their encounters with sex workers, and they cited 'evidence' to support their position such as spending time together 'off-the clock' for which they were not expected to provide financial compensation.

### **Literature on Male Sex Work**

Up to this point, we have been examining the literature on clients of women sex workers. Indeed, the assumption that sex work is male violence against women is problematized when men sex workers enter into the equation. Despite the fact that men sex workers comprise a robust 20-25% of the sex industry (Canada 2006), they are largely absent from sex work literature. Like women sex workers, most men sex workers provide their services almost exclusively to men (Baral et al. 2015, Browne and Minichiello 1995) and they are therefore doubly stigmatized as both sex workers and as gay, regardless of their sexual identity (Minichiello, Scott, and Callander 2013).

#### Literature on Male Sex Work ~1980-95

Beginning in the 1960s and throughout the 1980s, the majority of research on male sex work was conducted by psychologists who perceived male sex work as deviant and who sought to uncover psychopathological and psychosocial characteristics that predisposed men and boys to become sex workers. The literature focused on psychopathology (Simon et al. 1992, Earls and David 1989, Russell 1971), entry into sex work (Earls and David 1989, Boyer 1989, Cates 1989, Luckenbill 1985), and the

development of typologies of male sex workers (Luckenbill 1985, Allen 1980). Given these areas of focus, it is not surprising that men sex workers were represented in research as “passive and disempowered victims exploited and coerced into sex work” (Minichiello, Scott, and Callander 2013, p. 264).

Researchers of this era concluded that male sex workers exhibit higher levels of psychopathology than non-sex workers (Simon et al. 1992, Earls and David 1989, Russell 1971), and that this was likely what led men into sex work, although Simon et al. (1992) suggested that it was possible that higher levels of psychopathology are the result of working in a “dangerous and chaotic environment” (p. 33). In investigating psychosocial characteristics that predisposed men and boys to become sex workers, researchers found that male sex workers are more likely to have strained family relationships (Boyer 1989, Luckenbill 1985), experienced physical, sexual, or psychological abuse, or witnessed abuse in their family (Boyer 1989, Earls and David 1989), misused alcohol or drugs, or been raised in a family where alcohol or drugs are misused (Earls and David 1989), have a low level of formal education (Boyer 1989, Luckenbill 1985), suffer from low self-esteem (Cates 1989), and be 'thrill-seekers' or to seek adventure (Cates 1989, Luckenbill 1985). Notably, speaking of the intersecting stigmas embedded in academic inquiry, some researchers perceived the (deviant) identity as homosexual or bisexual to be a predisposing factor to enter sex work (Earls and David 1989, Boyer 1989, Luckenbill 1985).

Researchers also sought to develop typologies of sex workers, often in the form of a hierarchy, depending on their place of work and services offered (Browne and Minichiello 1996). Allen’s (1980) well-known typology classified male sex workers into

four categories: “group I, Full-time street and bar hustlers; II, full-time call boys or kept boys; group III, part-time hustlers, usually students or employed; and group IV peer-delinquents, who use prostitution and homosexuality as an extension of other delinquent acts [assault and robbery]” (p. 399). While “group IV” may engage in sexual activity with the men who hire them, their goal is “exploitation of vulnerable male homosexuals as a part of a peer-delinquent subculture. This group are mostly from the city, often housing projects, and they are part of a delinquent group also involved in other crimes. They are taught by older gang members how to be picked up by homosexuals and then threaten, assault, or blackmail the individual. They may threaten to report the homosexual to the police if he doesn't cooperate and will frequently beat him up even if he does” (pp. 406-7). Allen’s (1980) typology had a significant influence on the literature and is often referenced in subsequent research on male sex workers.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic, which came to general public awareness in 1982, inspired a particular interest in scholarship on male sex work, and a body of literature emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s that predominantly focused on the transmission of HIV (Bloor et al. 1993, Morse et al. 1992, Morse et al. 1991, Pleak and Meyer-Bahlburg 1990, Simon 1990, Coutinho, van Andel, and Rijdsdijk 1988). The interest of researchers shifted from the individual male sex worker to male sex workers as a 'high-risk' group (Browne and Minichiello 1996). There was a particular preoccupation with the potential for male sex workers and their clients to transfer HIV into the heterosexual population (Morse et al. 1992, Morse et al. 1991, Coutinho, van Andel, and Rijdsdijk 1988).

Coutinho, van Andel, and Rijdsdijk (1988) concluded that male sex workers in Amsterdam do not have higher rates of sexually transmitted infections than the general gay male population and therefore do not play a significant role in spreading infection among the gay male population. However, they hypothesized that the clients of male sex workers may include “a relatively high number of bisexual men” who hire male sex workers to conceal their bisexuality and therefore male sex workers and their clients may be vectors for the transmission of HIV and other STIs into the heterosexual population (Coutinho, van Andel, and Rijdsdijk 1988, p. 207). Similarly, Morse et al. (1991) found that male sex workers believed a significant portion of their clients to be heterosexual or bisexual and they concluded that male sex work was therefore a bridge for HIV to transfer into the heterosexual population. Follow-up research published a year later that interviewed clients directly confirmed that a majority of clients are either heterosexual (40%) or bisexual (53%) (Morse et al. 1992).

#### Male Sex Work ~1995-present

In the early 1990s, the literature shifted away from investigating male sex work as deviance or as a mechanism of HIV/AIDS transfer and instead began to explore male sex work as an income-generating activity (Browne and Minichiello 1996). Browne and Minichiello’s (1996) groundbreaking article “Research Directions in Male Sex Work,” “outlines approaches to theorizing about and researching male sex work” (p. 29). They concluded:

In order to reframe research into male sex work, it is necessary to proceed beyond bio-psychological models, and to examine the micro and macro forces on the conduct of male sex work and their safe sex practices.

Research which explores the immediate circumstances of the sexual encounter, the wider impact of political and economic forces, social constructions of male sexuality, and the interpersonal communication and power [relations] is needed to shed further light on the safe/unsafe sex negotiations of male sex workers and their clients (Browne and Minichiello 1996, p. 52).

Scholarship on male sex work has traditionally focused on street hustlers, despite the fact that they comprise only an estimated 10% of male sex workers (Minichiello, Scott, and Callander 2013). Moreover, the Internet has shaped the “structure and organization of male sex work,” increased the visibility of escorts,<sup>6</sup> and allowed researchers to access them (Minichiello, Scott, and Callander 2013, p. 263).

As research on male sex work shifted from the discourse of deviance to the discourse of sex work as work, less emphasis was placed on factors that predisposed or facilitated entry into sex work, and researchers began to investigate the organization of the work and the day-to-day activities of male sex workers. In the language of Minichiello et al. (2000), they would investigate the where, when, what, and how of the encounter. To that end, researchers from the mid-nineties onwards have examined such things as clients and their relationships with sex workers (from the perspective of sex workers) (Walby 2012, Logan 2010, Dorais 2005, Minichiello et al. 1999), third parties (Dorais 2005), services and rate structures (Walby 2012, Logan 2010, Dorais 2005, Minichiello et al. 2000), violence (Scott et al. 2005, Dorais 2005, Minichiello et al. 1999, Browne and Minichiello 1995, Bloor et al. 1993, Lowman 1992), the impact of sex work

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<sup>6</sup> An escort is an indoor sex worker who offers oral and/or sexual intercourse. They may also offer interpersonal services.

on workers' personal lives (Walby 2012, Uy et al. 2004), worksite locations (Minichiello et al. 2000), length of encounters (Minichiello et al. 2000), sources of clients, advertising, and screening clients (Walby 2012, Dorais 2005, Minichiello et al. 2000, Minichiello et al. 1999), sexual and professional identity (Dorais 2005), intimacy and surface acting (Walby 2012, Dorais 2005), and relationships with law enforcement, social workers, and healthcare providers (Dorais 2005).

It is worth noting that although research on male sex work and HIV/AIDS ceased to dominate the literature in the 1990s, we continue to see scholarship that operates in relation to this question. Dennis (2008) analyzed the content of 166 articles on sex work published between 2000 and 2007, and found that unlike on the focus on violence that characterizes the literature (and dominant narratives) on women sex workers, "the chief danger ascribed to them [male sex workers] was HIV rather than violence," and that 57% of articles concerning the 'dangers' of male sex work discussed the risk of HIV/AIDS (p. 11). While a lesser interest in male sex work and HIV/AIDS persisted through the 1990s and 2000s, researchers also began to critique literature that frames male sex work as inherently 'risky' and HIV prevention programs that seek to modify individual behaviour (Jackson, Highcrest and Coates 1992), and instead, they began to examine how social contexts, such as working conditions, can increase sex workers' vulnerability to HIV (Wong 1995 cited in Dorais 2005, Jackson, Highcrest, and Coates 1992).

As early as 1992, Jackson, Highcrest, and Coates (1992) observed that different 'types' of sex workers (e.g. street-based, escort) were not equally at risk of HIV, suggesting that social factors were at play in addition to individual behaviour. Bloor et al. (1993) sought to "establish the conditions that distinguish between those male

prostitutes who always practice safer sex with clients and those who currently report at least occasional unsafe commercial sex” (p. 154). Browne and Minichiello (1995) noted that research on male sex work and HIV has focused on the physical aspects of the encounters, while researchers “have ignored the meanings sex workers give to their sexual experiences, and how the meaning of having sex, perceptions of clients, and being a sex worker influence safe sex practices” (p. 599). Their research sought to examine “the safe sex negotiations of male sex workers within the contextual dynamics of commercial sex” (Browne and Minichiello 1995, p. 600). Early scholarship that examined social factors and HIV risk found that client control of the encounter is associated with lower rates of condom use, and therefore a higher risk of transmitting HIV or other STIs (Browne and Minichiello 1995, Bloor et al. 1993, Simon 1990). In addition, Simon (1990) found that sex workers who are economically dependent on sex work, or who derive sexual pleasure from their clients, are more likely to engage in activities that pose a higher risk of transmitting HIV.

Since the early 1990s, but more clearly so since 2000, scholarship has begun to examine how criminalization (Baral et al. 2015, Prestage et al. 2014, Bastow 1996, Wong 1995 cited in Dorais 2005, Highcrest and Maki 1992), and the stigma of sex work and same-gender sex (Baral et al. 2015), can increase the vulnerability of male sex workers and their clients to HIV and other STIs. In 1995, the Asian Community AIDS Services published its needs assessment of Asian sex workers in the Toronto-area, drawing a link between the criminalization of sex work and sex workers’ vulnerability to HIV. Two male sex workers labouring in massage parlours reported “owners have asked their workers not to have condoms with them for fear of legal incrimination” (Wong

1995, pp. 17-8 cited in Dorais 2005). Prestage et al. (2014) drew attention to the fact that while, globally speaking, male sex workers are classified as being at high risk of HIV, there is little evidence that male sex workers in Australia, where sex work is legalized, are at high risk of HIV. More recently, Baral et al. (2015) argue that “criminalisation and intersectional stigmas of same-sex practices, commercial sex, and HIV all augment risk for HIV and sexually transmitted infections among male sex workers and reduce the likelihood of these people accessing essential services” (p. 260).

### **The Clients of Men Sex Workers**

Sex work clients (those who hire both men and women) have rarely been subject to research interest. That said, historically the clients of men sex workers have drawn some scrutiny from researchers in relation to their ‘deviant’ sexuality. We are seeing a shift however and there is now more interest in researching the clients of women sex workers as a result of prohibitionist feminists and Conservative politicians who argue that legislators should ‘criminalize the demand’ (Minichiello, Scott, and Callander 2013).

While some research on clients makes no distinction in terms of gender and classifies the clients of men sex workers together with those who exclusively hire women sex workers (Lowman and Atchison 2006, Pitts et al 2004), the limited research that we have on the clients of male sex workers does not, with the notable exception of Morse et al. (1992), speak with clients themselves, but has instead has relied on interviewing sex workers about their clients (Dorais 2005, Minichiello et al. 2000, Minichiello et al. 1999, Browne and Minichiello 1995, Morse et al. 1992, Morse et al. 1991).

Early research on the clients of sex workers focused on their sexual orientation and behaviours with, as we have already seen, a preoccupation with the idea that they were potential conduits for transmitting HIV or other STIs. Recent research has found that men sex workers and their clients generally engage in safer sex practices, including the use of condoms (Minichiello et al. 2000). Furthermore, although men sex workers and their clients engage in a variety of sexual activities, less risky acts (i.e. mutual masturbation and oral sex) are more common than anal sex, which poses the highest potential for the transmission of HIV (Minichiello et al. 2000, Bloor et al. 1993, Pleak and Meyer-Bahlburg 1990, Coutinho, van Andel, and Rijdsdijk 1988). For example, Minichiello et al. (1999 and 2000) asked men sex workers to record each paid commercial sexual encounter over a 2-week period, analyzing 2088 commercial sexual encounters with 1775 clients, and found that only 40.7% of encounters included anal sex. This unique dataset allowed these scholars to “minimize many of the distortions inherent to recall methods such as telescoping and memory lapses” and allowed researchers to “investigate each sexual encounter as the unit of study” (Minichiello et al. 2000, p. 157).

Prestage et al. (2014) found that higher rates of unprotected anal intercourse (UAIC) among men sex workers and their clients are to be attributed to an ethic of sexual adventure and not to sex work itself. Their research revealed that both men sex workers and their clients are “more sexually active and adventurous in general than other men, and were more likely to have engaged in sex partying and group sex, including in the context of drug use,” and that there are “strong associations between being sexually adventurous, engaging in intensive sex partying, and reporting UAIC” (Prestage et al. 2014, p. 1297).

There is also a body of literature that documents the socio-demographics of the clients of men sex workers (Dorais 2005, Minichiello et al. 1999, Morse et al. 1992). This scholarship has established that the clients of men sex workers are a “highly heterogenous group” (Minichiello et al. 1999, p. 517). Men sex workers in Dorais’ (2005) research described their clients as being “of any age, appearance, sexual orientation, or identity, of having all manners of preferences and tastes” (p. 20). The clients of men sex workers are predominantly men (Baral et al. 2015, Logan 2010, Browne and Minichiello 1995), and research suggests that while a significant proportion of clients are gay, many are bisexual or heterosexual (Logan 2010, Dorais 2005, Minichiello et al. 1999, Morse et al. 1991). Minichiello et al. (1999) found that male sex workers identified 45.0% of their clients as gay, 31.3% as bisexual, 10.1% as straight, and 0.4% as transgender,<sup>7</sup> while participants reported that they did not know the orientation of 13.1%. The authors acknowledged that “it is not possible to know how accurately workers can assess the sexuality of their clients” (Minichiello et al. 1999, p. 516).

Men sex workers have reported that “some men view their use of sexual services as a way of exploring an aspect of their sexuality privately and under controlled conditions” (Dorais 2005, p. 93). Dorais noted that many sex workers in his research “expressed their continual surprise at the number of recent married men” and “divorced men coping with their homosexuality or bisexuality” (p. 20). The author argues “these men’s need for anonymity and clandestinity is evidently satisfied by secretive contact with a rent boy” (Dorais 2005, p. 19). While it may come as a surprise to many that men who identify as heterosexual would have sex with men, Dorais cites Adam et al. (1998)

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<sup>7</sup> It is unclear why Minichiello et al. (1999) consider “transgender” to be a sexual orientation.

as arguing in a report submitted to Health Canada that sexual identity has as much to do with emotional involvement as it does with sexuality, and this may explain why a significant portion of clients identify as heterosexual.

Minichiello et al. (1999) found in a sample of 1775 clients reported by male sex workers in multiple venues that sex workers perceive the overwhelming majority of their clients to be 'middle class' or 'rich', and that the majority were in their 30s or 40s, although they caution the reader that “these findings must be viewed with some caution because they are based on the MSWs<sup>8</sup> perspective” (p. 517). In a small sample of fifteen clients of male street-based sex workers, Morse et al. (1992) found that about half of the clients were white and the other half were Black, ages ranged from 19-49 with a median age of 30, seven were never married while 4 were currently married and 4 were separated or divorced, their “level of education varied from completion of the 10th grade to college graduate, with a modal category of high school graduate,” and “three (20%) of the customers identified themselves as businessmen or professionals, while 12 (80%) indicated that they worked in skilled or semiskilled jobs” (p. 352).

While the relationships between men sex workers and their clients are often characterized as being purely sexual in nature, there has been limited attention paid to the social and intimate aspects of these relationships that are more likely to evolve when a client hires the same sex worker regularly over a period of time (for a notable exception see Walby 2012). In a sample of 2088 commercial sexual encounters described by men sex workers, 44% were reportedly with clients that the sex worker had previously seen. Furthermore, 313 of the 1775 clients in their research repeated

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<sup>8</sup> MSW is an acronym for male sex worker.

with the same sex worker within the two-week period over which the research was conducted (Minichiello et al. 1999). Minichiello et al. (2000) found that 1/4 of the time was spent talking in 45.5% of encounters, and half or most of the time was spent talking in 39.9% of encounters. Surprisingly, 2.1% of encounters included no sexual activity.

Dorais (2005) notes briefly that intimacy can develop between a sex worker and his regular client “which some of our respondents compared to a filial or couple relationship” (p. 75), although, he argues that while “a degree of friendship or complicity may develop over time, the reciprocity and commitment characteristic of friendships and love relationships are generally absent” (p. 93). Although the clients of men sex workers are a difficult to reach population for numerous reasons including the dual stigma of same-gender sex and sex work, it is encouraging to note that after the French publication of Dorais’ (2003) book *Travailleur du sexe*, several clients of men sex workers wrote to him, unsolicited, to share their experiences (Dorais 2005).

### **Moving Forward**

In the absence of a body of research that specifically explores men’s experiences hiring men escorts, the literature on the clients of women sex workers and male sex work will allow me to situate my findings. Scholarship on the clients of women sex workers provides a point of entry and highlights the importance of questions regarding why men hire sex workers, their perceptions of risk, the meaning men ascribe to the purchase, the nature of their relationships with sex workers, and their emotional well-being as it relates to their experiences with sex workers. Furthermore, considering how my findings might diverge from those on the clients of women sex workers enables me to consider the possible ways in which gender and sexual identity condition men’s

experiences hiring men escorts. The literature on male sex work will allow me to contextualize my findings by considering the perspectives of men sex workers including their experiences and their perceptions of their clients. It is this body of literature that sex workers discuss, among other things, sexual health risks, intimacy and surface acting, their relationships with their clients, and the sexual identities of their clients.

While these bodies of literature will aid in my analysis, there is clearly a significant gap in the literature in terms of research that examines men's experiences paying men for sex by interviewing them directly. In concluding *Rent Boys*, Dorais (2005) states, "the most unexplored aspect in the body of research on prostitution concerns the relationships between clients and sex workers, especially those that are not exclusively sexual in nature" (p. 92).

# Chapter Three

## Methods and Methodology

This thesis endeavours to explore men clients' relationships with the men escorts they hire, how such relationships play out in their lives, their experiences hiring, and their perceptions and experiences of stigma and social judgment. Accordingly, in-depth qualitative interviews “provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of each person’s individual perspective, for in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomenon is located, and for very detailed subject coverage” (Lewis and Nicholls 2014, p. 56). Moreover, “understanding people’s motivations and decisions, or exploring impacts and outcomes, generally requires the detailed personal focus that one-to-one interactions allow (Lewis and Nicholls 2014, p. 56). In-depth one-on-one interviews allowed me to uncover detailed individual perspectives of men’s experiences hiring men escorts without the constraints of pre-designed survey questions, and allowed for the research to go in unanticipated directions (Rallis and Rossman 2012).

For this research, I analyzed ten in-depth semi-structured interviews with men who hire men escorts, which were conducted as part of a larger SSHRC-funded

research project on the sex industry entitled “Sex Work and Intimacy: Escorts and their Clients,” (Principal Investigator, Dr. Colette Parent; Co-investigator Dr. Chris Bruckert). The project, which shared my valorization of the experiential voice, interviewed escorts and clients of all genders.<sup>9</sup>

In this chapter, I start with a discussion of my positionality as a researcher and consider that I occupy roles as both an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’<sup>10</sup> in my research. I then move on to discuss ethical considerations including the confidentiality of research participants who are criminalized and stigmatized. I will detail the interview design, recruitment strategies, sampling, interviewing guidelines, the interviewers and their positionality, the men who participated in this research, and approaches to coding and data analysis. I will conclude by considering the limitations of the research.

### **Positionality**

It is widely recognized that “our values and interests and ethics—passions and principles—are part of who we are and thus play a major role in determining or generating what we say we know” (Rallis and Rossman 2012, p. 34). Reflexivity is “looking at yourself making sense of how someone else makes sense of her world” (Rossman and Rallis 2012, p. 47). Generally speaking, researchers hold multiple social relationships with the people or communities they are researching (Fawcett and Hearn 2004) and these social positions have often been contrasted as ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ research. ‘Outsiders’ may be more inclined to misinterpret others as they may

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<sup>9</sup> Other research projects on the men clients of men sex workers have gathered data from sex workers rather than speaking with clients themselves (see for example Minichiello et al. 1999 and Browne and Minichiello 1995).

<sup>10</sup> Insider research is where the researcher is a member of the community or social group they are researching, and outsider research is where they are not.

miss particular nuances that an insider would recognize or not have the prior knowledge to adequately appreciate the perspectives of research participants. An advantage that 'outsiders' hold is that they are able to perceive things that 'insiders' may not. Particular ideas or nuances may be so familiar to an 'insider' that they may be taken for granted and go unnoticed, or they may not recognize the significance.

Naples (1996) argues that "'outsiderness' and 'insiderness' are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations" (p. 83). I hold positions as both an 'insider' and an 'outsider' in my research. Indeed, I have been extensively involved in the sex workers' rights movement over the last six years and therefore have 'insider' knowledge of the sex industry and of men who hire escorts, as well as an 'insider' status in the sex working community in Ottawa that predates my involvement in sex work research. As an 'insider', I understand the language and cultures of the sex industry and am better-positioned to understand the significance of participants' experiences. This enabled me to more accurately code the interviews. As a straight woman, I also occupy a position as an 'outsider' among men who have sex with men, men who hire escorts, and particularly among men who hire men escorts. As such, I am mindful that I may have missed particular nuances or failed to attend to the significance of some points.

### **Interviewers**

Dr. Parent and Dr. Bruckert hired three research assistants to conduct the interviews for their larger project. The interviewers were trained in non-directive in-depth interviewing techniques and were instructed to request clarification regarding 'insider' language and when any ambiguities presented themselves. The interviewers were

active in the sex worker rights movement, and their position of trust within this community facilitated recruitment. Furthermore, the interviewer hired to interview men who hire men escorts identified as a gay man, which was a significant advantage as he was able to establish a rapport with the men in a way that a woman or heterosexual man could not. Their shared sexual orientation elicited a particular narrative and enabled the interviewer to tease out their stories. At the same time it is, of course, entirely possible that some terms or experiences were not discussed with the detail that they may have been if the interviewer were not a gay man because there was a shared understanding of language and culture.

### **Ethics / Confidentiality**

Dr. Parent and Dr. Bruckert received ethics clearance for their project on July 22nd, 2004, from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa. Extensions were granted in July 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008. I received ethics clearance for secondary use of data from Carleton University on February 26th, 2015 (see Appendix A for REB certificate). Recognizing that ethics approval is not sufficient to produce ethical research (Rallis and Rossman 2012), in addition to following the protocols outlined in the ethics application, I was careful to respect the lived experiences of research participants by respectfully reflecting their voices attending to meaning, context, and nuance. Unfortunately, researchers are not always this conscientious and this has resulted in sex workers being critical of researchers (Weldon 2010). It was also important to me to produce research that would be of value to the communities of those interviewed.

While the anonymity of research participants is always important, it is especially critical when research participants are stigmatized and (at least potentially) criminalized. The confidentiality of the men, who face social judgment and criminalization for their participation in the sex industry, is paramount. Participants were assigned a pseudonym and at no point were they asked for their name or personal information. The audio recordings were stored in a secure location and destroyed after five years. The transcribers performed a preliminary anonymization by removing names, places, and personal details. A secondary anonymization was then performed removing the details of particular stories and speech patterns that could potentially identify the research participants, and the original transcripts were destroyed. The twice-anonymized transcripts are stored on two password-protected computers, and only myself and Dr. Bruckert have access to them.

### **Interview Design**

Dr. Parent and Dr. Bruckert's research project was exploratory and designed to "understand underlying values, concepts and norms" and took "a more open approach to encourage participants to take the lead and shape their own narrative" (Arthur et al. 2014, p. 148). The interviews were therefore semi-structured, a form of interviewing where the interviewer has a "list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered (an *interview guide*), but the interviewee still has a great deal of leeway in deciding how to reply. Questions may not follow the exact order in the guide and some questions not included on the list may be asked in response to what the interviewee says" (Bryman, Bell, and Teevan 2012, p. 166, italics in original). The interview guide was considerably flexible, allowing the interview to be guided by the participant. The interviewers were

instructed to follow up with new questions when the interview would go in unanticipated directions. Although the interviewers had considerable freedom in terms of the questions they would ask, the interview guide served to ensure that there was consistency in data collection across the interviews.

Research participants were asked about sexuality and intimacy, the place that encounters with escorts occupy in their lives, a typical encounter, what they seek in an encounter, their relationships with escorts, risks and their implications, their history as a client, whom they speak with about their experiences as a client, and social judgment. The interview concluded with demographic questions to aid in the analysis including their age, marital status, children (if any), sexual identity, and ethnic background. In concluding the interview, participants were asked if the interview raised any questions about the law and regulations, or anything else, and if they would like to receive more information (see Appendix B for the interview guide).

### **Recruitment, Sampling, and Interviewing**

The recruitment ads invited self-identified clients of escorts to participate in the research. For the purpose of recruitment, 'escort' was defined as a person offering sexual and intimate services in exchange for money at an indoor location, including both incall and outcall. Recognizing that a representative sample of the clients of escorts is unachievable because they are stigmatized and criminalized, every attempt was made to recruit research participants in a variety of ways to gain a diverse sample. Research participants were recruited in Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa by posting advertisements for the research at several online locations where escorts advertise their services, through the personal and professional networks of the interviewers, and

through snowball sampling. I chose to analyze the interviews of men who hire men escorts exclusively, as opposed to men who hire both men and women escorts, in order to focus on men who hire men escorts, and to ensure the integrity of the data.<sup>11</sup> The interviews, which took place in 2008 and 2009, were between one and two hours in length. Participants were offered a \$50 honorarium in recognition of their contribution, which was given to them before the interview commenced. In keeping with established ethics protocol to ensure free consent, participants were advised the honorarium was theirs to keep and they were free to withdraw from the project at any time.

### **Research Participants**

The literature (see for example Dorais 2005, Minichiello et al. 1999) has found that the clients of men sex workers are a highly heterogeneous group; this was also evident in the current research. Participants varied between ages thirty-five and seventy-five with an average age of forty-eight. Five men were single, four were married or living common-law with another man, Jerry was married to a woman, and Bernard, who was single at the time of the interview, was divorced from a woman. Seven of the men identified as gay, Jerry identified as bisexual, and Steve and Bernard resisted applying a label to define their sexual identity. Nine participants identified as white or caucasian, and Brad identified as racialized.

The men had been hiring escorts for from five to over thirty years, and they sought a variety of services including a massage with mutual masturbation, oral sex, anal sex, and companionship. Four participants specified that they do not seek anal sex in their

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<sup>11</sup> I had initially included in my sample two men who hired men and women escorts and I excluded them on the basis that it was not possible to discern when they were speaking of their experiences with men as opposed to women escorts.

encounters with escorts. The clients primarily hired escorts for outcalls, with nine of ten participants indicating that they have hired an escort for an outcall. Six participants had an experience visiting an escort's incall location, although three indicated that this was only on one or two occasions.<sup>12</sup> The men would generally hire an escort every couple or few months, and Peter and Simon reported that they had 'on and off' periods. The length of their encounters with escorts varied from about an hour to an evening and overnight.

### **Data Analysis**

Dr. Bruckert and I developed a codebook from the literature, interview guide, and transcripts of the interviews (see Appendix C for the codebook). We familiarized ourselves with the data by conducting a vertical reading of the interviews (i.e. each interview and question individually) and noting themes to contribute to the codebook. Using NVivo, the interviews were 'team-coded' line by line with one of us reading the transcript aloud. The code list was adapted as we coded to reflect the data, and we would recode interviews when appropriate (for example, when we introduced a new code). We then proceeded to conduct a horizontal analysis of the data (i.e. groups of texts from different interviews that share common themes or ideas) by reading across codes to make sense of the data, and further noting patterns and themes that arose. We clustered similar stories, ideas, and themes together and noted points of disjuncture, drawing upon the data in its entirety to be inclusive of all responses, regardless of whether they 'fit' or not.

### **Limitations**

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<sup>12</sup> The men were not specifically asked if they hired escorts for outcall or incall encounters, and we therefore cannot assume that those who did not mention an outcall/incall experience have not had one.

I will now turn to consider the limitations of the research. As was detailed in the introduction, the laws governing sex work in Canada have changed since the interviews were conducted. The data therefore does not reflect Canada's current prostitution laws or social perceptions that have been shaped by the various discourses, outlined in the introduction, that accompanied the legal challenges and introduction of Canada's new prostitution laws.

It is important to note that I did not design the research project, conduct the interviews, or listen to the audio recordings. I was therefore unable to give feedback on the interview guide, direct the interviews, clarify participants' responses, or pick up on nuances reflected in speech patterns and body language. However, the project was broadly-based exploratory research and research participants were asked non-directive and open-ended questions, allowing me to analyze the data with diverse lenses of my own.

The thesis draws upon a small number of interviews (10) and therefore is not generalizable to the broader population of men who hire men escorts. However, this is an exploratory study undertaken with a 'hard to reach' population that has received almost no attention from researchers. In this context, a small study of in-depth interviews nonetheless makes an important contribution and, at a minimum, provides a point of departure for future research.

The sample is not representative of men who hire men escorts. Not only is it a small sample size, but a generalizable sample of a criminalized and stigmatized population is unachievable. Moreover, there are two additional reasons why the sample is not representative. First, it is unlikely that clients who have only had brief sexual

encounters with escorts would be interested in reflecting upon their experiences in a one to two hour interview. Inevitably then, the sample was skewed towards clients who have had ongoing and perhaps even personal or complicated relationships with the escorts they hired, rather than clients who may have had the occasional impersonal sexual experience with an escort. It is likely that the research recruited participants who are more likely to view their experiences with escorts as having played a significant role in their lives.

Second, the research likely appealed more to openly gay men than to 'bi-curious' heterosexual men, or to men who live their lives and present themselves as heterosexual but who secretly identify as bisexual or gay. The literature (Logan 2010, Dorais 2005, Minichiello et al. 1999, Morse et al. 1991) has found that many clients of men sex workers are bisexual or heterosexual and they may hire sex workers in order to conceal their sexual interest in men. Clients who identify or who live and present as heterosexual, and who hide their sexual interest in men by hiring men escorts, are likely less inclined to participate in research, than clients who openly identify and live as gay, for fear of 'outing' not just that they have paid for sex, but that they "live a double life" (Dorais 2005, p. 93).

Now that I have detailed my methods and methodology, I will turn to look at the findings of this research.

## Chapter Four

### Setting the Stage: The Commercial Sexual Exchange

Relatively little research has explored the lived experiences of men who hire sex workers. However, as we saw in Chapter 1, “The Literature on the Clients of Sex Workers: Exploiters? Deviants? Vectors of Disease? Service Consumers?,” prohibitionist feminist scholars have examined the question of ‘why’ men engage in the (presumed to be) ‘deviant’ activity of paying for sex. Researchers operating from this perspective (sex work is male violence against women) have found that men purchase sexual services as an act of dominance over women (Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008, Farley 2007) and as a “right [*sic*] of passage” (Durchslag and Goswami 2008, p. 14), or to validate their masculinity (Farley et al. 2012). These researchers assert that the relationship between men who purchase sexual services and the sex workers they hire are violent and exploitative. There is also a narrative that men hire sex workers because they are physically unattractive or lack the social skills to have sex in a non-commercial context (Joseph and Black 2012).

In this chapter, I juxtapose these claims and underlying assumptions with the men's own narratives of why they hire escorts, and their perceptions of their relationships with the men they hire. In this largely descriptive chapter, I consider what participants identified as the advantages of hiring an escort, explore the process through which an escort is hired, detail what happens during the encounter, and examine the changing nature of their relationships with escorts. In the process, two emergent tensions are unpacked: 1) clients want 'the best of both worlds' – the benefits of both a commercial and non-commercial relationship, and 2) clients view authenticity as being outside of the commercial exchange. I conclude the chapter by suggesting that the perceptions of mutual pleasure and emotional connection may be different for men who hire men as opposed to women escorts.

### **What are the Advantages of Hiring an Escort?**

It is widely believed that anonymous sex is readily available within the gay community.<sup>13</sup> (Marlowe 1997) and, in this context, it becomes particularly interesting to reflect upon the reasons why men hire men escorts. Participants were not directly asked why they hire escorts, although they nonetheless explained the numerous advantages of hiring an escort and why it was the best option for them to fulfill their sexual and/or social desires at particular moments or in particular contexts.

For some of the men, hiring an escort provided a sexual release and/or companionship during a period in their life in which they were socially isolated. For example, Jim hired numerous escorts throughout his thirty years of international travel

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<sup>13</sup> Certainly public health hysteria around gay men and HIV suggests that anonymous sex is readily available. This is also evidenced by the vast array of ways in which gay men can 'hook up' in our technological world including Grindr, gay.com, and squirt.org.

when he was away from his partner and social networks at home. Steve began hiring escorts when he had little social contact with other people through work or outside of work: *“I thought, I’m not meeting anybody anyway, so I’ll try this.”* When he began to meet more people and enter into non-commercial relationships, he hired escorts less frequently.

At other times, the men indicated that they hired escorts when they were disconnected from the gay community and ‘hook-up’ scenes. Peter said *“I don’t go to bars, I’m not part of the gay scene, so the easiest way is escorts.”* Simon told us much the same thing: *“I don’t go to saunas; I don’t do all that stuff – never have. I don’t like it. So I’ve always been a bit of an odd duck.”* Joshua reflected *“I don’t go out to bars now. I haven’t for some time. [...] Every so often I head off downtown on Saturday night, visit a couple of bars and think ‘boy am I ever glad I don’t have to do this anymore.’ [laugh] So instead I’ve tended to be involved more in connecting with escorts for my ‘chocolate bar’ [treat].”*

Research on clients of women sex workers has found that many clients seek the simplicity of paid experiences (Jones 2013, Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Joseph and Black 2012, Pitts et al. 2004, Plumridge et al. 1997, Jordan 1997). Five participants reported that hiring an escort is easier than ‘hooking up’, and Peter’s experiences were similar to many participants:

*I’m not a relationship kind of guy, so a quick fix is to hire an escort. It’s easier than getting on a website like gay.com or Squirt and trying to hook up. It’s really hard actually, so this is the fastest way to do it. [...] If I were to go on Squirt and try to meet somebody, there’s going to be 20 emails exchanged,*

*how many pictures, probably no-shows. This is to avoid all those games.*

*Because when I want something, I want it right now and paying for it is the way that I found that works best for me, just to avoid all that crap of having to try to hook up online.*

Others, like Jack and Joshua, appreciated that sex with an escort is ‘a sure thing’:

*One of the perpetual beefs in the cruising scene in the gay community is how many guys are into the chase. It’s almost a catch and release kind of thing.*

*‘Oh, I caught you, now I don’t care. Bye-bye’, without even bothering to have sex. All kinds of guys will spend hours in a hunt process and when arrangements are finally made and they’re supposed to meet somebody later, they don’t. There could be reasons that could change their mind, but a lot of it is that they have had their thrill, the thrill of the chase trying to arrange something, not so much for the actual sex. [...] If I go through the chase, I’ll have the meal besides. (Joshua)*

While the literature has established that sex workers set boundaries and refuse to see clients for a variety of reasons (see for example SWUAV et al. 2014, Lewis and Shaver 2006), acceptance of a diverse range of clients is an important part of being able to survive and thrive economically in the sex industry. Of course, refusing clients limits one’s income potential. Raymond, Simon, and Steve reported that escorts were more accommodating and less judgmental than the men they would meet ‘hooking up’, specifically in regard to physical disability, being HIV-positive, and poor interpersonal skills. Indeed, Walby (2012) wrote that “many clients of male sex workers are unable to engage in sexual encounters outside of this context because of the ways their bodies or

faces look. Touching encounters provide contact for men who might otherwise remain untouched” (p. 150). Raymond, who had a physical disability that affected his legs and back, said:

*When I'm feeling not so good and I just want to get off, it's easier to call a prostitute than to hobble out to a bar or explain to somebody online 'oh, by the way, I can't do certain things because my body isn't letting me do certain things'. [...] Prostitutes seem to be far more understanding of the limitations of their clients than just men in general. [...] They walk into it as if they're coming to do a job, and there are a few limitations of things they can't do, but they're still able to do the job, so they're not put off by it.*

Simon, who was HIV-positive and would always disclose his status to his sexual partners, noted that he experienced much rejection in the dating world but “*found the acceptance rate from the escorts was extremely high.*”<sup>14</sup> Steve, who described himself as being shy and “*not the most talkative person,*” found that hiring an escort relieved pressure and eased his social anxiety: “*Finding that I could give someone money and have his attention – it broke through a bit of a barrier. I didn't have to try to come up with something interesting to say to someone. I didn't have to worry about how I looked or whether I ran fast enough or skied steep enough mountains.*”

While hiring escorts, as explored above, can be about convenience, it can also provide an illicit pleasure. Jack, Simon, Joshua, and Raymond described their

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<sup>14</sup> Walby (2012) found that “disclosing HIV/AIDS status almost automatically leads to rejection in the dating scene except in groups of men who actively engage in “barebacking.” But some escorts refuse the pervasive fear of HIV/AIDS and, in a sense, break the touching barrier” (p. 162).

experiences hiring escorts as “*thrilling*”<sup>15</sup> and for Joshua and Raymond, the excitement of hiring an escort would come from contravening social norms. When Joshua asked himself why he would hire escorts when he was successful at ‘hooking up’ at bars, he explained that he was seeking “*some kind of thrill, in this case back then, it had to do with it being just a little bit beyond the pale given that I had a 4-star upbringing where [laugh] my parents, had they known, would have been horrified.*” For Raymond, “*paying for sex is a bit of a rush on its own. It’s an illicit transaction, and frankly, an illicit behaviour in our society. While it’s shunned, it also provides a bit of its own thrill, from the fact that it is contravening the norms of society. That’s a definite component of hiring a prostitute for me.*”

A final comment on the meaning of the exchange: Sex workers are sometimes understood to be fulfilling a fundamental human need for sexual intimacy and human touch. This perception was not shared by the men, many of whom described their encounters with escorts as a “*treat*” (Joshua, Jack) and a “*luxury*” (Raymond). Joshua explained “*I could probably live quite happily without doing it. The only way I can describe it is ‘give myself a treat. It’s time for a chocolate bar’. You can easily live without a chocolate bar.*”

These findings challenge the scholarship that suggests that men hire sex workers because they enjoy holding power over the sex worker (Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008, Farley 2007), and the assumption that men hire escorts because they are ‘pathetic losers’ who are unable to have sexual experiences in non-commercial contexts.

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<sup>15</sup> Jones (2013) and Pitts et al. (2004) found that men hire sex workers for adrenaline, excitement, and entertainment.

## Setting up an Encounter

Setting up an encounter was, for many participants, an important part of the process of hiring. Ironically, despite the fact that many of the men reported that hiring an escort is easier than ‘hooking up’, they would spend considerable time researching advertisements, viewing the online profiles of escorts, and arranging commercial sexual encounters. For example, Joshua would engage in four or five days of online research on gay ‘hook-up’ websites before he would contact an escort to arrange a session.

Somewhat surprisingly, given that the sex industry is clandestine market sector, clients could identify escorts in a surprising array of ways, including mainstream media. Indeed, participants found escorts through print media geared towards the gay community (Bernard, Jack, Simon, Steve) including Xtra! (Bernard), Hour<sup>16</sup> (Simon), Mirror<sup>17</sup> (Simon), and Fugues (Simon, Steve); and online websites (Bernard, Brad, Joshua, Raymond, Peter), including those that offer a space explicitly for advertising commercial sex such as Craig’s List<sup>18</sup> (Peter, Raymond), and gay ‘hook-up’ websites and chats that were not specific to sex work (Brad, Joshua, Peter, Raymond, Jerry) such as squirt.org (Joshua, Peter, Raymond) and gay.com (Joshua, Jerry). Steve arranged encounters with escorts through escort agencies he found in the classified section of the local newspaper because he had no connection with the gay village in Montreal where print media geared towards the gay community was readily available. A

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<sup>16</sup> Hour ended its publication on May 3rd, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Mirror ended its publication on June 22nd, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> At the time these interviews were conducted (2008-9), Craig’s List had an “erotic services” section in Canadian cities. On December 18th, 2010, Craig’s List announced that it would shut down the “erotic services” section in Canadian cities. It had already been shut down in American cities on May 13th, 2009. Today, sex workers of all genders, including a prominent proportion of men, advertise openly in Craig List’s “therapeutic services” section.

number of participants had experiences hiring sex workers through other venues such as bars (Jim, Simon), the streets and public parks (Brad, Joshua, Simon, Jim, Jerry), and still others were referred to escorts by a close friend/lover (Raymond), online friend (Peter), or another escort (Jerry).

In addition to screening escorts to mitigate sexual health, financial, security, legal, and emotional well-being risks, which will be explored in Chapter 5, “Clients Speak of Navigating and Negotiating Risk,” participants reported screening escorts to ensure both a good encounter and value for their money. An advantage of the commercial sexual encounter is that the men can ‘shop’: *“It’s just easier to buy exactly what you’re looking for”* (Peter). Participants would begin by reviewing escort ads. Contrary to the widely held perception that men looking to pay for sex want someone who is particularly ‘hot’ (e.g. an escort who resembles a Playgirl model), many specified that they were looking for someone with an “*average*” (Jack, Bernard, Jerry) physique, and “*an everyday kind of person*” (Jack). Jerry said “*most of the time I enjoy somebody who’s slim to average looking, not necessarily a body builder or anything else, but slim to average looking.*” Simon would seek in escorts “*the same physical profile as I would a so-called ‘normal’ guy out in a bar dating.*” That said, the men had diverse, and sometimes quite specific, preferences.<sup>19</sup> While Jack was attracted to men who were “*a bit furry,*” Jim said “*I don’t like people who are hairy. So [I prefer] smooth skin.*” Joshua would seek “*the university jock,*” and Steve would look for escorts who had “*dark eyes, dark hair, a darker skin tone, athletic, more muscular guys, and hairy.*”

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<sup>19</sup> Walby (2012) found that “there is no singular ideal body in Internet escorting, so there is no one stylized body that body work could aim toward” (p. 152).

It is perhaps surprising in a society that valorizes youth that the stereotype that clients prefer younger escorts is not supported by the data, although it would appear that over 30 is considered 'mature' in this context. Indeed, Peter, Raymond, Steve, and Jim indicated that they were not interested in 'tweens' or 'twinkies',<sup>20</sup> and many of the men preferred escorts who are around 30 (or older). Jack explained that mature escorts were generally "*more experienced, more fun, and tend to be more into it.*" Unlike the others, Jim preferred younger men under age 30, and Brad would seek escorts who were "*skater-looking, teenaged, 19-to-22-year-olds.*"

While viewing escort ads was an important part of ensuring a good encounter, participants were mindful that "*you can only believe their marketing to a certain degree*" (Raymond) and would screen in order to discern 'red flags' in the ad. For example, some clients would avoid escorts whose rates, in their view, were "*too high*" (Bernard). Bernard explained "*if someone's going to charge an astronomical amount of money for something that someone else would charge half of that for, then he's obviously very pretentious and has a lot of attitude.*" Jack and Peter expressed that they would avoid escorts in the \$300-range who were "*clearly trying to gouge you. That's insane when all they're doing is giving you a rub down or something*" (Jack). Nonetheless, escorts who charged lower rates were not necessarily perceived to provide good value. Jack, who avoided hiring escorts with lower rates, said "*I don't want to go for the ones that are cheap because they tend to be either not as attractive or not as into it, or they try to short change you on your time.*"

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<sup>20</sup> Although every participant defined 'twinkies' differently, it was generally accepted that the term refers to young men who are in their teenaged years, or appear to be, and who may be thin, hairless, and/or effeminate.

With the advent of the Internet, online reviews for various professions and services have proliferated, including the sex industry. Some of the clients, like Raymond, would read online reviews and comments on the profiles of escorts they were considering hiring in order to ensure a good encounter. Raymond described one website: *“It’s a collective webpage with individual pages of each prostitute, and they have reviews on there.”* Others would seek out referrals from other clients. For example, Peter would discuss escorts with a man he met on squirt.org: *“We warn each other who to stay away from.”*

If they were satisfied with the ad (and, in some cases, the reviews), screening would continue when they made contact with the escort. It is interesting to note that escorts also screen their potential clients at this stage (Walby 2012). Setting up an appointment was in part about trying to ensure, in this unregulated industry, that representation of their physical looks and services was accurate.<sup>21</sup> In order to maximize the potential for a positive encounter, they would undertake, what Simon likened to, *“a job interview”* where the goal is to get a sense of who the person is. Jerry explained what this would entail: *“[trying to] get a feel, just from voice and the way they speak, and everything else, what kind of person they’re going to be.”* Bernard spoke of learning to be able to listen and be a better judge of character, Peter would *“feel them out a little bit”* and learned *“how to weed out the bad guys,”* and Joshua’s approach was softer, in that he *“formed senses”* to assess compatibility with an escort’s personality.

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<sup>21</sup> While ensuring accurate representation is likely a concern when purchasing mainstream services, those who purchase services in a criminalized and stigmatized industry have little recourse when the service provider has misrepresented themselves and their services.

While most relied on intuition, many also would attend to cues — for example, Jack would ‘screen out’ escorts who sounded “*too eager*” on the phone because he suspected that may be a sign that “*they’re not getting any business, for some reason.*” If the fee was stated in the ad, Jack would ask the escort to confirm the rate over the phone because, in his experience, escorts would sometimes quote a different rate which, for him, was a ‘red flag’: “*I tend to get turned off by that right away ‘cause I know they’ve already started to play games before we even meet.*”

In addition to screening to ensure a good encounter, participants reported that they would hire the same escort regularly, rather than try someone new. Brad said “*you have to go through so many bad ones to find one good one.*” Although Jack said “*I like a little variety,*” he would nonetheless tend to repeat with escorts rather than researching and taking a chance on someone new who may, or may not, provide him with a good experience:

*Whether I want to try somebody new or somebody I’ve seen before depends on how much time I have. If I’m pressed for time, I might see someone that I know. If I’ve got a three or four day weekend, and I have time for two separate encounters, I might see someone that I know, and then someone that I don’t, just for something different, because I have the time to research.*

For some participants, screening for a good encounter would continue when they met the escort in-person. Simon explained “*I’m apprehensive for the first thirty minutes because that is the period where if they are going to change, they change.*” Jack, Steve, and Peter reported being disappointed when they learned that an escort had misrepresented himself, and was not as he appeared in his photos. Some would take

precautions — for example, Raymond and Jerry would meet escorts at the front door of their apartment buildings before inviting them to their respective apartments. Raymond explained: “*The initial at-the-door period is just to make sure that they are who they said they are and that they physically are what they’ve represented themselves to be.*”

Raymond was aware that the escort was also likely screening him, and he would begin the encounter with a drink and chat in order to assure the escort that he was “*normal.*”

Joshua, for similar reasons, would meet the escort in a public place (e.g. a coffee shop) so that they could interact face-to-face before heading to a more private location for the encounter, giving the escort the option of backing out if he was no longer interested in proceeding with the encounter.

### **The Encounter**

We now turn to look at the commercial sexual encounter and examine the social and sexual aspects of the men’s encounters with escorts. I will present a spectrum with sessions that are only sexual in nature at one end, and encounters that are primarily social in nature at the other.<sup>22</sup>

At one extreme, participants would seek a sexual encounter and were not interested in social aspects. Raymond, who said, “*if I get an itch, I scratch it,*” indicated “*I’m not looking to lay in bed and cuddle afterwards and make sweet talk. This is purely a physical thing. I’m not looking to have a prostitute come in and provide me with hugs and kisses and cuddling. I’m looking to have a sexual outlet.*” Similarly, Peter said

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<sup>22</sup> The men’s expectations could shift depending on a variety of factors including their ‘mood’. For example, while Jim was, for the most part, interested in an entire evening with an escort including dinner and drinks, at other times he was seeking an experience that was “*purely of a sexual nature.*” For this reason, the men may appear at various points on the spectrum.

*“there’s really no social part of it other than the sex and the enjoyment of another body. I’m not looking to meet Mr. Right, just Mr. Right Now.”*

At the other end of the spectrum, the social aspects of the encounter were a prominent factor for Joshua, Simon, and Jim, who would often spend an entire evening or longer with an escort. Simon commented, *“there isn’t actually a lot of sex. It was their company.”* Jim reflected *“some of these people, I would be really quite happy if I didn’t have sex with them afterwards. Just the enjoyment of their company was fine, but the added part of it [sexual aspects] was also nice.”*

Many participants, however, fell between these extremes at a place where they desired both sexual and social aspects, notably however, the social aspects of the encounter (e.g. having a drink together and talking), as well as any kind of emotional connection, were valued by many because they made the sexual experience more enjoyable (see also Sanders 2008a, Earle and Sharp 2007). In Joshua’s words, liking the person you are with *“makes it a whole lot easier to lay hands on [them].”* Raymond would enjoy chatting for a few minutes before an encounter, although he said *“I don’t make a point of extending beyond a few minutes because they are here to perform a job and that’s what I want them to do. I’ll say at that point ‘shall we go to the bedroom?’”*

Jerry appreciated:

*General chit-chat to get to know the person a little bit more so that when you do move into the bedroom, you have a sense of having met that person a little bit and knowing a little bit about them, and same thing, vice versa, them knowing a little bit about you, so there may be a bit more comfort level in the bedroom.*

Still others would be satisfied with an encounter that was primarily sexual in nature, and intimacy was considered, when it occurred, to be “*a bonus*” (Steve). While Jerry was seeking “*sexual satisfaction*” in his encounters with escorts, he noted, “*to a certain extent you hope it will be more than just the sex.*” Steve expected a sexual release only but said “*I don’t expect intimacy. If it’s happens, that’s great*” and noted that “*you can have a good encounter without having a high level of intimacy.*” Nonetheless, he recalled a particularly memorable encounter:

*I arranged an appointment with an escort, and we ended up spending the night together. We were both in bed and naked. There was no orgasm at any point. We just lay there together all night, talking and touching. It wasn’t sexual enough to actually be an orgasm, but I felt closer to him in some ways than most of the people that I’ve met in my life. We were open with each other, the way we were talking about our pasts, and just lied next to each other. There was no physical barrier between us. That’s one of the most intimate experiences I’ve ever had.*

It is interesting to note that social etiquette appears to be applied to many of the clients’ encounters with escorts. Participants primarily hired escorts for outcalls and were therefore “*hosting*” (Jim) the escorts they would receive at their home or hotel. Raymond would always offer a drink to the escorts he hired: “*Usually I’m aiming for non-alcoholic, but a couple of guys have said ‘I’ll have a beer’.* I don’t believe that having anyone in your home, whether they be there for a service or there socially, shouldn’t be welcomed into your home. Then we get down to business.” He also explained that he

would greet them at the door: “*Hello. How are you? Come on in. Stomp the snow off your shoes’ or whatever, you know, the seasonal demands.*”

### **Relationships with Escorts**

The clients described a spectrum of relationships with escorts with ‘one night stands’ at one end, and relationships that resembled a traditional partnership at the other. The nature of the relationships between sex workers and their clients has been, as noted in the introduction, characterized by many researchers as being an exploitative ‘deviant’ relationship in which the client asserts power over the sex worker (Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Farley et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008, Farley 2007).

When asked to compare their relationships with escorts to other relationships in their lives, the men generally likened hiring an escort to ‘hooking up’. Joshua explained that ‘hooking up’ is “*not a whole lot different from arranging to be with an escort. The only difference in the first instance is the absence of money.*” Simon would treat escorts “*like I would somebody I picked up at the bar*” and, when in the company of escorts, Jack conducted himself “*in the same way I would with anybody else.*”

The research data reveals a complexity around the question of the commercial exchange and a spectrum of relationships that pivots on the significance they attributed to the financial aspect of the experience or relationship. For some of the clients, their encounters with escorts were an “*exchange of money for services rendered*” (Joshua). Many participants used the word “*transaction*” (Brad, Raymond, Steve, Peter, Jack) to describe their experiences with escorts, suggesting that the commercial exchange was at the forefront of their relationships. Jack explained, “*there is a beginning and an end to*

*it, and you walk away and that's the end of it. It's not going to become anything else."*

Speaking of escorts, Jack recognized, *"they're in it for the business."* Raymond's perception was that *"they're providing a service much the same as you would pay anyone to do any other service in your life. I've got a plumber coming to my house. I've got an electrician coming to my house. I've got a sex trade worker coming to my house. It's all the same."*

While most of the clients in this research recognized the commercial nature of the relationship and acknowledged that the appearance of mutual pleasure and an emotional connection may be *"fake chemistry on their side"* (Peter), most desired at minimum a credible illusion that the experience was also pleasurable for the escort (see also Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Pettinger 2011, Sander 2008a, Jordan 1997). Jack indicated that, while he preferred an escort to experience pleasure, it was acceptable that escorts *"conduct themselves in such a way that you kind of buy into it."* Similarly, Peter was interested in escorts who were able to *"make you think, or actually maybe do, enjoy the experience."*

While a credible illusion was acceptable to Jack and Peter, most (including Jack and Peter) preferred that the escort be *"genuinely interested, not just for the transaction, but for their own enjoyment"* (Jack), a finding which is strongly mirrored in the literature (Jones 2013, Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Sanders 2008a, Jordan 1997, Plumridge et al. 1997). While we may be inclined to interpret clients' experiences of mutual pleasure as merely 'good' surface acting on the part of the escort, Walby (2012) found that many male escorts reported sexual pleasure in their paid sexual encounters, and their stories *"complicate the claim that intimacy [on the part of escorts] is always feigned"* (p. 111).

Joshua was put off by the idea that some men escorts are heterosexual: *“He’s not going to be interested. What’s the point? It’s not just a question of getting me off one way or another. I want the other guy to enjoy it also, to some extent anyway.”* Jack explained:

*Some people are naturally good at giving you a good experience and others really have to work hard at it. The ones that I enjoy, it just seems to come naturally to them. It looks like they’re also having a good time, and it’s not an effort. Those are the people I like to see again. If they’re just into it for the money and that’s it, it’s kind of boring and you tend to not go back.*

It was important to Jack that the escort also experience an orgasm because then he would know *“they enjoyed themselves. That’s a part of the fun. It’s on a more equal level.”* Peter commented that, *“I like both parties to end up feeling great. They made some money; they had some fun. I gave them money; I had my fun.”* At times, the participants expressed that the financial exchange was an insignificant aspect of their encounters with escorts. Jack’s perception was that when the experience is mutually enjoyable, *“the money is just a tiny aspect of it.”*

While the men expressed a desire for a mutually enjoyable experience while recognizing (if at times, downplaying) the commercial aspect of the relationship, in Jim’s case it appears that he misunderstood the nature of the market transaction and obscured the commercial exchange. Jim (age 75) recounted an experience with a particular much younger escort in his twenties who he would see on a regular basis and whom he described as being *“friends with”* for four or five years. When Jim described the nature of their close and intimate relationship, he did not discuss any financial aspect. When the interviewer asked whether the relationship continued to be a paid

relationship throughout their years of friendship, Jim explained that the exchange was more general: "*Here's some money for the week.*" He was interested in becoming intimate partners with this (much younger) man, who "*didn't want to settle down,*" and suggested to him an open relationship where they could see other people: "*I would have liked to see it become a more long-term because we did get to know each other a lot and we enjoyed each other's company. I think it would have worked out but he wasn't prepared to even try so that was fine and he made it quite clear so.*" The rejection did not spoil the relationship and they carried on until the young man moved away and they lost touch.

Like any other relationship, the men's relationships with escorts were at times complex, and prone to failing, changing, and evolving. While many participants described hiring escorts for "*one or two night stands*" (Jim), in which case the experience would often be "*strictly monetary*" (Jerry), most participants spoke of rehiring the same escort which opened up (without that necessarily being the intent) the possibility of a friendship or 'personal' relationship forming. With the exception of Jack, all participants spoke of forming a friendship or non-commercial relationship with one or more escorts. Although it is unclear if this perception was shared by the escort(s) they hired, Walby (2012) found that escorts may experience friendship with their clients and that "the escort and client sometimes form a relationship that moves in directions neither of them anticipated prior to their encounter" (p. 30). Steve said "*there have been a couple of very significant relationships in my life that have started out as simply a transaction with a sex worker and grew into a friendship.*" Some of these friendships and personal relationships would last "*up to ten years*" (Jerry) or longer. Although Jack,

who was the only participant who did not indicate he had a friendship or non-commercial relationship with an escort, did not use the word ‘friendship’ or ‘relationship’, he said of one particular escort he would hire regularly “*he’s friendly. I can maybe even see going out for a beer with him some time,*” recognizing the potential for a friendship or non-commercial relationship. That said, in spite of the reality that almost all participants had formed a friendship or personal relationship with an escort they hired, most expressed that this was not desirable. Five participants were explicit that they would actively seek to avoid an intimate relationship with the escorts they hired because it could pose a risk to their emotional well-being. Peter succinctly explained “*intimacy and escorts. Not two words I’d really mix together.*” This issue will be explored further in Chapter 5, “Clients Speak of Navigating and Negotiating Risk.”

## **Reflections**

I will now present two tensions that emerged in the research. The first, smaller issue, considers how men who hire men escorts may interpret mutual pleasure and emotional connection differently than men who hire women escorts. Second, I will consider the larger issue that the men wanted ‘the best of both worlds’ with the benefits of both a commercial and non-commercial experience.

Research on men clients of women sex workers suggests that when the experience is mutually pleasurable and/or when there is an emotional connection, clients often believe that this is an unusual experience, and that it separates them from “other men who [are] just customers” (Egan 2006, p. 68) (see also Jones 2013, Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Jordan 1997). However, with the exception of Jim, this was not the case for the men who participated in this research. While the clients identified that they

experienced mutual pleasure and emotional connections in their encounters with escorts, these experiences were not assumed to be unique and many presumed that the escorts they hired experienced pleasure and intimacy with other clients.

It is unclear why this may be the case, although we can consider that patriarchal sexual scripts frame women's sexual desires as less than that of men, and suggest that, unlike men who aspire to multiple sexual partners, women desire monogamy (Marques 2014). While the men clients of women sex workers cannot deny that they see other clients, they can interpret the experience as being 'monogamous' in a sense if they reduce the sex worker's other encounters with clients to be merely 'work' and not 'special'. However, this difference may be because women are outside of the equation or it may be because monogamy in gay culture is not read the same way as it is in heteronormative society. In fact, Joshua and Brad explicitly told us that their partners were aware that they had sex with other people,<sup>23</sup> and Raymond was introduced to hiring escorts by a friend with whom he had an intimate relationship.

Second, a contradiction emerged — the men desired a commercial exchange and articulated the advantages of hiring an escort, yet they often wished for the market transaction to be disguised in their encounters with escorts. While their sexual experiences with escorts were generally carefully researched, planned, and explicitly negotiated in advance, they wanted the experience to feel as though it evolved 'naturally'.

Speaking of a good experience with an escort, Jack said "*it almost seems like he's not an escort. He's that good and that into it. It just feels like someone you've met*

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<sup>23</sup> Jim and Steve, who were in long-term relationships with men, did not indicate whether they were in open relationships or not. Jerry was married to a woman and the remaining five participants were single.

*and you're both going at it and you're both having a good time.*" His ideal encounter was to show up for a massage and, *"going with the flow,"* to have the session go further sexually in what he described as a *"natural"* way where sexual acts were not explicitly discussed. Similarly, Jim wanted to believe that the sex would occur 'naturally' when he said he would seek an escort *"just to entertain for dinner and then see what happens."* In addition, Peter and Jack noted that the physical payment is done in a discreet manner: *"The exchange of money is done very subtly so it doesn't seem like a transaction. As you're talking and saying goodbye, you just set it down on the table. You don't actually give it to them directly. They see you put it there and it's very subtly done"* (Jack). This tension is also experienced by sex workers who are "supposed to act like their interactions and expressions of sexual interest in regulars are natural and authentic while simultaneously getting men to pay them for their time" (Egan 2006, p. 45).

While the men generally acknowledged the commercial exchange and desired an encounter that would be pleasurable for the escort, many implied that when the experience is mutually enjoyable, or where there is an emotional connection, these elements are not a part of the financial exchange, suggesting that mutual pleasure and intimate connections are not compatible with a commercial transaction. Steve recounted that he experienced moments where there was *"something more than just what was being paid for, more than just a business transaction."* He indicated that he could tell the difference between *"what's being faked and what is real,"* explaining *"it's just a feeling I get one way or another whether the person is being genuine, whether he's actually open to a bit of a connection or not. Is this just a business transaction?"* Similarly, when

Jim would rehire the same escort, he indicated that they would become “*more friends than on a professional basis.*”

The desire for authenticity is not unique to the sex industry. One can reasonably conclude that patients seeing a psychologist wish for someone who ‘really cares’ about them, and parents who hire child care workers undoubtedly expect that those who mind their children genuinely care for and enjoy spending time with them. However, this nonetheless begs the question — is authenticity outside of the commercial exchange?

Job satisfaction is normatively accepted and people generally aspire to fulfilling and satisfying work. It appears that the men are exceptionalizing the sex industry in that when the worker experiences pleasure or where there is an emotional connection, it is perceived to no longer be ‘work’. In fact, our modern service economy has commercialized many services which were once relegated to the sphere of the ‘home’ and outside of the commercial market, including child and elder care (Bernstein 2007). Bernstein’s (2007) concept of “bounded authenticity” has been used by researchers (see for example Milrod and Weitzer 2012) to understand how authenticity can be a part of the commercial exchange.

## Chapter Five

### Clients Speak of Navigating and Negotiating Risk

Sex workers are often framed as being ‘at risk’ while their clients are understood as posing a ‘risk’ to sex workers and the broader community. Macleod et al. (2008), concluded that, “once viewed as a form of violence against women stemming from sex inequality, prostitution is best understood as a transaction in which there are two roles: exploiter/predator and victim/prey” (p. 30). As we saw in the introduction, in early 2014, Justice Minister Peter Mackay declared that “prostitutes are predominantly victims” (Kennedy 2014) and, in announcing Bill C-36, he asserted that Canada’s new prostitution laws would target the “perpetrators” who are “johns and pimps” (Dunn 2014).

Perhaps not surprisingly, most especially given the limited research on clients in general, researchers have paid comparatively little attention to the risks faced by sex workers’ clients,<sup>24</sup> save for some attention to the potential transmission of HIV and other STIs (Morse et al. 1992, Morse et al. 1991, Coutinho, van Andel, and Rijdsdijk 1988). The

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<sup>24</sup> A notable Canadian exception is Chris Atchison who has conducted two quantitative research projects entitled “Sex, Safety & Security: A Study of the Experiences of People Who Pay For Sex in Canada” and “Johns’ Voice.”

current research sought to address this knowledge gap while taking a different approach that, rather than imposing risk categories, created a space for clients of escorts to reflect upon and name risks, and speak to their risk management strategies. In addition to the risk of 'outing' (which will be discussed in the next chapter), the men identified five categories of risk: sexual health, financial, security, legal, and emotional well-being. In this chapter, I begin by discussing the men's approach to risk before unpacking the five categories of risk identified by participants. I conclude by briefly considering those men who identified themselves as a risk to the escorts they hire – albeit not in the way it is framed in the literature.

### **Navigating and Negotiating Risk**

Most clients had few problems hiring escorts and were not preoccupied with the more serious risks of arrest, contracting HIV, robbery, and violence. For many participants, their most pressing preoccupation was that the escort had misrepresented himself, or that the encounter would be disappointing: “*The only threat to me is the guy who is not what he said he was going to be*” (Peter). Bad experiences that were financial were the most common, ranging from theft of personal property to spending too much money on good experiences with escorts. While security risks were identified as the most vivid concern, only two men had an experience where their security was threatened.

The men's comfort with the risks notwithstanding, they nonetheless described a range of risk management strategies, most of which are preventative, while several are deterrent. Participants spoke of “*taking a chance*” (Joshua) and of accepting a certain level of risk: “*Rather than encasing myself in Lucite, I believe that you have to go out*

*and do what you do*” (Raymond). Interestingly, suggesting they perceive hiring an escort to be an inherently risky undertaking, seven participants described themselves as “*lucky*” and Jack and Jerry said they were “*very fortunate*” to have avoided bad experiences.

## **Sexual Health**

Since the 1980s, researchers and public health agencies have been preoccupied with male sex work and HIV (and, to a lesser extent, other STIs) often constructing sex workers (and especially male sex workers) and their clients as vectors of disease (Bloor et al. 1993, Morse et al. 1992, Morse et al. 1991, Coutinho, van Andel, and Rijdsdijk 1988).<sup>25</sup> Unlike these researchers, participants took a more measured approach.<sup>26</sup> Raymond and Joshua explained that the sexual health risks associated with hiring an escort, while real, are no different from casual sex with a non-sex worker. Raymond reflected “*if I were to pick up a sexually transmitted infection from a prostitute, it wouldn’t be any different than if I picked it up from somebody who I wasn’t paying.*” Joshua, not only didn’t “*view escorts as intrinsically a diseased community, more so than the general population, or the gay population,*” but also felt there was a higher proportion of HIV-positive men at the bathhouses than among escorts, whom he believed, as professionals, are more likely to guard their sexual health.

The participants in this study employed a number of different strategies to mitigate the risk of contracting HIV and other STIs. First and foremost, and consistent

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<sup>25</sup> Researchers of this era were less interested in the health of male sex workers and their clients, and were instead preoccupied with their understanding that the clients of male sex workers often have sexual relationships with women and therefore may transfer HIV into “populations with currently low infection rates” (Morse et al. 1991, p. 535).

<sup>26</sup> With the exception of Joshua, who contracted Hepatitis B from a sex worker he hired several decades ago, all participants indicated they had never contracted an STI from a sex worker.

with the findings of Minichiello et al. (2000), participants reported using condoms consistently for anal sex, although no participants reported using condoms for the, markedly less risky, oral sex<sup>27</sup> (see also Kolar, Atchison, and Bungay 2014). Some participants were preoccupied with ensuring that the escort they hired consistently engaged in safer anal sex practices. For example, Bernard and Raymond would both 'feel out' escorts over the phone and decline the appointment if they were under the impression that the escort may offer unprotected anal sex to them or other clients.

Raymond explained:

*I'm interested in preserving my health, and I don't want to be with anybody who isn't also interested in maintaining their own health. I find out about their attitudes towards condom use before I indicate to them that I insist on condom use. If they're quite clear that condoms must be used and they're quite reasonably informed about safer sex, then we can proceed forward.*

In addition to using condoms, many clients indicated that they manage sexual health risks by engaging in safer activities, such as oral sex and mutual masturbation, and avoiding anal sex which poses the highest risk for the transmission of HIV ("HIV Transmission Risk" 2013). A few participants undertook visual inspections of the escort's genitals prior to engaging in sexual activity. For example, Peter would "*look for any kind of ailments or skin marks or anything that would send up a red flag.*" Somewhat surprisingly, given that it is self-evidently a questionable strategy for assessing health ("Young People and HIV/AIDS" 2010), Peter, Jim, and Jerry indicated that they could intuitively determine if an escort is 'healthy' and whether they may have an STI after

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<sup>27</sup> "Findings suggest a low but non-zero transmission probability" ("HIV Transmission Risk" 2013).

*“spending a few minutes with them”* (Peter). Jim suggested that, *“you look at the person and you’ve got an idea whether he’s healthy. You just have a general feeling.”* This is concerning considering that you cannot tell if a person has HIV through a visual inspection. While sexual health risks have received a measure of attention in the literature, we now turn to other, largely ignored, risks that figured in the men’s narratives.

### **Financial**

The participants identified a number of financial risks associated with hiring an escort, including theft and robbery. Simon perceived himself to be at a higher risk of theft due to drug use during his encounters with escorts, commenting that most of the time *“your instincts are be careful and don’t party too much. You don’t want to fall asleep while they’re here.”* In this research, only Bernard and Brad had personal property stolen by an escort they hired.

Clients are also vulnerable to robbery by an escort or by a person posing as an escort.<sup>28</sup> Simon had two experiences where an escort, or someone posing as an escort, arrived at his location and, instead of delivering the expected service, intimidated him into handing over his money.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Bernard once had an escort, or a person posing as an escort, take payment for an encounter without providing the service. Here, the distinction made in the literature is worth considering. Clients may experience theft or robbery by an opportunistic escort, or they may be victimized by a person who poses as an escort with the intention of committing a theft or robbery. In Bruckert and Chabot’s

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<sup>28</sup> Atchison, Vukmirovich, and Burnett (2015) found that 15% of sex buyers had experienced a robbery in the course of hiring a sex worker (p. 43).

<sup>29</sup> This experience also posed a risk to his security and will therefore be discussed in the next section.

(2010) needs assessment of sex workers in the Ottawa-area, they draw a distinction between 'aggressors' "who may present themselves as a client (or as a community member) but whose intention is to inflict physical, sexual or financial harm on the sex worker" (p. 32) and clients who commit situational violence, which Lowman (2000) defines as occurring "when a dispute arises during the course of a transaction and the client resorts to violence to resolve it" (p. 1004). This distinction can be applied to clients' experiences of victimization.

The participants in this research took a number of precautions to reduce the risks of theft and robbery from escorts or predators. As was the case in the research conducted by Atchison, Vukmirovich, and Burnett (2015), the most common financial risk management strategy was to avoid having valuables within eyesight for an outcall encounter and to not bring valuables to an incall establishment. For example, when Brad was expecting an escort at his home, he would "*dump all my stuff in the laundry room that's important, like my wallet,*" and Jack, who frequented incall locations, mentioned "*I won't bring anything valuable with me, like a wallet full of cash. I'll bring just enough money and a little bit more to get a ride back.*"

For Jack, Jerry, and Bernard, selecting the venue of the encounter (i.e. incall vs. outcall) was a financial risk management strategy. Jerry was particularly careful in screening escorts when he would invite them for an encounter in his home, and, in screening a new escort, he would ask himself "*can you leave them alone in your bedroom while you're washing up?*" After experiencing property being stolen, Bernard would no longer invite escorts to his home except for an individual with whom he had an

established commercial relationship. Selecting the venue is also a security risk management strategy and will be further explored in the next section.

A common strategy to reduce the risk of paying for services that are not rendered was to negotiate paying for the encounter after the service has been delivered. Like Bernard, Raymond was very assertive in telling escorts that they would be paid after the service was provided because "*if I pay you and then the services aren't rendered, there's not really any recourse for me,*" knowing that, as is the case for sex workers, criminalization and stigma are a barrier to reporting victimization to the police (Krüsi et al. 2014, Bruckert and Chabot 2010, Lewis and Shaver 2006). That said, since requesting payment upfront is a financial risk management strategy that is employed by sex workers (Bruckert and Law 2014), this tactic on the part of clients can create tension, something that Raymond managed by showing the escort the cash to reassure him.

Some of the financial risks were more about not receiving value for money, or spending too much money on good experiences. Jack, Peter, and Jerry all spoke of "*wasting*" money and/or time on bad experiences or 'no shows', which can be mitigated, as seen in Chapter 4, "Setting the Stage: The Commercial Sexual Exchange," by screening to ensure a good encounter. In addition, the clients we spoke with had budgets and self-imposed restrictions in regard to hiring escorts both in terms of the cost per session and frequency of hiring. Jack and Joshua sought experiences in the one-hundred dollar range and Brad, who did not want to become "*addicted*" to hiring escorts, budgeted to see an escort "*once a month.*" Jack, who "*moves on other things*"

and does not focus his attention on seeing escorts “*all the time,*” budgeted to hire an escort once every three months or so.

## **Security**

Most participants identified that hiring an escort may pose a security risk, and particular situations are perceived to increase or reduce one’s vulnerability. Brad identified himself as ‘at risk’, not only because drugs were consumed during his encounters, but also because the escorts could discover that he was HIV-positive. Bernard indicated that he was more susceptible to violence due to his physical disability, explaining “*I don’t want to put myself into a situation that I can’t deal with or where I am going to be vulnerable, having a physical disability.*” Joshua and Peter both believed that their personal characteristics mitigated security risks, albeit for very different reasons. Joshua said that he comes across as a strong character, and he hesitantly noted that he had been told that he is intimidating. In contrast to Joshua, Peter explained, “*there have been no problems threatening-wise because I’m not really a threatening kind of guy.*”

Somewhat surprisingly, given their rational approaches to other potential risks, participants expressed something approaching hysteria around security risks and evoked language that stigmatizes people with mental illness such as “*crazy*” (Jack), “*insane*” (Peter), and “*nutcase*” (Joshua, Jerry) to describe the person they fear meeting when hiring an escort. Four participants identified random acts of predatory murder as a risk. Bernard described the possibility of meeting a “*psycho*” who would murder him, Peter avoided incalls because he had “*heard horror stories of people getting killed,*” and

Steve recalled, “*the first time or two that I hired an escort there was a bit of worry of, ‘what if this person shows up at the door with a knife and kills me in bed?’*”

Despite these vivid anxieties, only Simon and Joshua had experiences where their security was at risk.<sup>30</sup> As was noted in the previous section, on two occasions, Simon received what he thought was an escort at his home but when “*they got into the house, it was all a scam, and they just started bullying and demanding.*” In order to protect himself, Simon yelled, threatened to dial 911, and gave him all the cash in his wallet. Joshua had a similar experience thirty years ago when he was cruising Major’s Hill Park (Ottawa) where a man identified himself as an escort, stuck his hand in his pocket, claimed he had a gun, and demanded money. Joshua obliged and escaped the situation physically unharmed. The individuals who committed these robberies used threats and intimidation for financial gain, which is contrary to the classic hedonistic serial killer that the participants described fearing. Moreover, the circumstances of these experiences suggest that Simon and Joshua were not victimized by escorts, but by people who posed as escorts. This, of course, does not diminish the potential security risk of hiring an escort. Predators may target the clients of escorts because criminalization and stigma undermine their ability to access police services. One can reasonably conclude that people are generally more likely to report that a plumber robbed them than an escort, rendering the clients of escorts a target for predators. For some men, including Bernard, acknowledging an interest in same-gender sexual encounters is another barrier to accessing criminal justice redress.

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<sup>30</sup> These findings are consistent with Atchison, Vukmirovich, and Burnett (2015) who found that less than 5% of sex buyers in Canada had experienced threats and only around 1% had experienced physical violence.

In order to mitigate the risk to their physical well-being, clients may, as we saw with Simon and Joshua, hand over money to escorts whether it is rightfully owed or not. Similarly, if an escort had misrepresented himself, Peter would pay him, even if he was not interested in proceeding with the encounter, to avoid a confrontation, indicating that *“losing a hundred dollars is better than getting stabbed.”* Bernard experienced threats when he refused to pay an escort and, after these experiences, he would pay the escorts he hired in order to protect his security. His non-payment will be discussed further at the end of this chapter.

A less common strategy that echoes the ‘safe call’<sup>31</sup> used by sex workers (Bruckert and Law 2014) is to let someone know the time and place of the encounter so that if they experience a violent situation and do not return, someone knows where they are and can take appropriate action.<sup>32</sup> Bernard, who had a physical disability, mentioned *“I have a caregiver that lives reasonably close by, and sometimes, I’ll let him know that I’m having someone over.”* Jack admitted *“some people will tell a friend where they’re going or they’ll write out a note and leave it somewhere with the phone number or the address in case something bad happens. I don’t actually take precautions like that.”*

In addition to researching an escort’s online reviews to ensure a good encounter, reading reviews is also a security risk management technique (see also Atchison, Vukmirovich, and Burnett 2015). For example, Jack noted that in investigating escorts he was considering hiring, he found reviews that warned that the escort robbed or punched a client, and he was therefore able to avoid a potentially violent situation.

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<sup>31</sup> For sex workers ‘safe calls’ are when they arrange that a third party will implement security protocols if they do not receive a call at a prearranged time indicating that the sex worker is safe.

<sup>32</sup> See also Atchison, Vukmirovich, and Burnett (2015) on the lesser frequency of this security risk management strategy.

It is well-established that sex workers screen their clients in order to protect their security (Krüsi et al. 2014, SWUAV et al. 2014, Lewis and Shaver 2006) and the way criminalization limits this was at the heart of the *Bedford* case. As we saw in Chapter 4, “Setting the Stage: The Commercial Sexual Exchange,” clients in turn screen escorts to ensure a good encounter, but they also screen to protect their security, albeit in quite personally specific ways. After a couple of bad experiences, Simon would try to be more selective of the escorts he would hire. If he met an escort at a bar, he would engage in a dialogue in order to establish a comfort level that he was in little or no danger. Jack would go with his “*gut feeling*” and “*screen out*” escorts who sounded “*crazy*” on the phone or “*too eager*” to meet him because he suspected that they may be intending to rob or assault him. Peter believed that “*rough trade*” guys who are into bondage and sadomasochism, spanking, leather, and “*all that weird crap,*” or who have multiple tattoos, pose a higher security risk and he would therefore avoid hiring them. Jim felt more comfortable having the escort’s phone number and calling escorts who advertised in a print newspaper because he believed he, or the police, could easily find the escort should he experience victimization.

For several participants, screening to ensure their security would continue when they met the escort in person. When Jerry would book an appointment, he would give the escort the address of his apartment building, but not his apartment number. He would then meet the escort at the front door of his building and decline to invite him in if he sensed that the individual was not going to be “*forthright and trustworthy.*”

Only two participants, Peter and Steve, managed security risks by using an escort agency. Peter believed that it is safer to use a third party because “*there has*

*been some regulation involved. They know who the guy is. They know he's not a murderer or insane.*" Of course the method is fallible – it is unclear what screening the agencies do and how they would know whether an escort has a criminal record or poses a security risk.

As we have already seen, selecting the venue (i.e. incall vs. outcall) for the encounter is a risk management strategy, although both types of locations were presented as mitigating security risks. Jack felt safer going to an escort's incall because if he were to find himself in an unsafe situation, it is easier to leave the escort's incall than to kick the escort out of his home or hotel, and Jerry would screen escorts more carefully if he was inviting them into his home because of the risk that they could turn violent and refuse to leave. In contrast to Jack and Jerry, Peter and Jim identified that outcalls are safer. Peter would not go to an escort's home unless he had met them before and established a comfort level, although he acknowledged of outcalls that *"there's always a concern for safety because they're coming to your home and they have your address."* Jim believed it is safer to see an escort for an outcall because *"when they're coming to you, you have more control over the situation."*

Brad, who hired escorts to 'party and play'<sup>33</sup> and (unlike Simon) would not disclose that he was HIV-positive, confided *"I don't want to tell these people. I don't know why. Maybe because of the drugs. They might just kill me or something."* Concerned that his insistence on condom use would make the escorts suspect he was HIV-positive and possibly result in violence, he would tell them *"you're the working boy. I'm insisting because maybe you have something."*

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<sup>33</sup> 'Party and play' refers to using drugs and having sex.

## Legal

As we saw in the introduction, at the time the interviews were conducted, clients of sex workers were vulnerable to being charged for communicating (CC s. 213.1) if they solicited a sex worker on the street and for being ‘found in a common bawdy house’ (CC s. 210.2) if they visited a sex worker at a fixed incall location. The majority of participants primarily hired escorts who advertised online or in print media for outcalls, and had limited experiences visiting an escort at their incall establishment. Participants identified legal risks associated with hiring escorts, yet, with the exception of Steve, they had a limited or mistaken understanding of the laws criminalizing sex work. Indeed, Peter and Jim were under the (false) impression that paying for sex itself was illegal:<sup>34</sup> “*It’s okay to advertise for sex as an escort, but I think the actual exchange of money for sex is illegal*” (Peter). This is important to consider, given that Justice Minister Peter Mackay stated that a key objective of the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* is to deter the purchase and sale of sex (Canadian Press 9 Sept 2014). Deterrence, of course, pivots on knowledge of the laws and the consequences of breaking the laws. Notably, the overwhelming majority of participants’ encounters with escorts were on an outcall basis (which was not criminalized in Canada at the time), yet not one participant mentioned that they were not vulnerable to criminal charges for this reason, suggesting that prostitution laws are ineffective at deterring clients because they are not knowledgeable about the laws.

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<sup>34</sup> The interviews were conducted in 2008-9, before the introduction of the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* which became law on December 6th, 2014, criminalizing the purchase of a sexual service.

Although no participants reported encounters with the police or legal system as a result of hiring sex workers, they noted, but were not preoccupied with, the risk of arrest. For the most part, the men were aware that police focus their attention on the street-based sector.<sup>35</sup> In general, the men felt that although prostitution is criminalized, enforcing “*antiquated laws*” (Steve) was not a priority for law enforcement and the broader community because “*society is becoming far more liberal and isn’t necessarily interested in bothering prostitutes and their clients*” (Peter).

In addition to thinking that police do not focus on indoor sex workers, participants also, perhaps not surprisingly, felt the law inappropriately imposed on activities between consenting adults: “*I don’t think the police have any business in what I do in my bedroom if I’m paying for it or not*” (Raymond). Peter declared that the government and police should “*pay attention to human trafficking, exploitation, and physical violence*” perpetrated against sex workers. Bernard and Jerry pointed out that criminalization contributes to stigma: “*Social ethics dictate that paying somebody money for sex is morally wrong and that might have a lot to do with the fact that it’s not a legalized trade*” (Bernard).

Peter was the only participant who identified legal risk management techniques, and it is important to consider that these strategies are based on misunderstandings of the law and therefore did not necessarily mitigate his risk of arrest. Based on his false belief that it was illegal to pay for sex, Peter would tell escorts “*I’ll donate money for your time. I’ll give you a massage,*” something he felt also reassured escorts that he

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<sup>35</sup> Their position is supported by the fact that, prior to the Supreme Court of Canada ruling in the *Bedford* case, approximately 95% of charges related to prostitution in Canada were for communicating for the purpose of prostitution in a public place or within public view (Uniform Crime Reporting Survey 2005, 2006, 2007).

was not a police officer. He was also under the false impression that police officers have a legal obligation to declare that they are police officers if directly asked, and he would therefore ask escorts before scheduling an appointment if they were a police officer. In addition, he would “*feel out*” an escort over the phone in order to establish a comfort level that he was not a police officer, although he acknowledged that he does not know how a police officer posing as an escort would present himself.

### **Emotional Well-Being**

Some participants identified that hiring an escort could pose a risk to their emotional well-being should the relationship become ‘personal’, a finding which is also evident in the literature (Jones 2013, Milrod and Weitzer 2012), or when the experience was disappointing. Peter and Steve reported bad experiences hiring an escort in terms of their emotional well-being when the relationship became intimately close. Peter and an escort he was hiring regularly started dating and eventually cohabited together. His partner was still escorting throughout their relationship and he disclosed that “*I was okay with it at the beginning and then it just got to me after awhile so I don’t think I’d want to go down that road again. Definitely no. The emotional part of it was hard, when you fall in love with somebody who’s in that business.*” Steve, who preferred to have an intimate connection with the escorts he hired, had experienced disappointment, noting that “*I can pretty much tell what’s being faked and what is real, and that is something that took me awhile to learn, but I’m glad I did because I got duped a few times.*” Although he alluded to emotional consequences, he did not explain what they were.

Jack, Peter, and Simon had bad experiences where a disappointing encounter had emotional consequences. When Jack wasted his money, he would feel “*guilty*” and

Peter would feel “*disgusted*” with himself after a disappointing experience. Simon, who struggled with mental health, explained “*if I have a bad experience, it pushes my anxiety and depression even worse.*”

In order to protect their emotional well-being, the men would establish and maintain boundaries in their relationships with the escorts they hired. Peter said he became “*purposely cautious about what happens in that hour in reflection to emotions. I try to make it sexual and that’s it.*” Jack would establish clear boundaries and avoid forming an emotional attachment. He would not engage in “*too much*” conversation and would not rehire escorts who he was very physically attracted to and who were also friendly because “*if they push all your right buttons, it’s almost a bit dangerous. Maybe find someone you’re attracted to but not too attracted to.*” He was adamant that escorts will never become your boyfriend, friend, or intimate partner, and he therefore concluded that clients of escorts must separate their emotions from the experience in order to avoid disappointment. In addition to mitigating financial risks, screening for a good encounter can also prevent the distress of a disappointing experience.

While many participants identified that hiring an escort can pose a risk to their emotional well-being, hiring an escort can also be a risk management strategy. The literature has established that men may hire a sex worker in order to avoid emotional involvement that accompanies more conventional sexual relationships (Milrod and Weitzer 2012, Jordan 1997). This finding is consistent with Peter’s approach: hiring an escort is also a strategy to maintain his emotional well-being. He explained that there is less danger of “*feelings involved or going further than what I want*” as compared with ‘hooking up’.

## **When Clients are the Risk**

Although the interview guide did not explore whether the clients pose a risk to the escorts they hire, Brad, who was HIV-positive, identified himself as a potential risk to the sexual health of escorts with whom he had encounters. In addition to using condoms (noted above), he would engage in activities, himself as ‘bottoming’,<sup>36</sup> which he perceived to pose a lower-risk for the transmission of HIV.<sup>37</sup>

Bernard reported that on one or two occasions he did not pay the escort he had hired for his services,<sup>38</sup> confessing “*I wanted sex, and I didn’t care if I could afford it.*” At the end of an outcall session, he would explain to the escort that, due to severely restricted mobility in his left leg, the escort would need to go downstairs to withdraw payment from the ATM. He would give them the wrong pin code, lock his door, and when the escort returned, he would tell them to leave and threaten to report them to the police for stealing his bank card.

## **Reflections**

The findings in this chapter contribute to the literature that challenges the assumptions that sex workers and their clients are vectors of disease (Bloor et al. 1993, Morse et al. 1992, Morse et al. 1991, Coutinho, van Andel, and Rijdsdijk 1988), that clients view sex workers as objects (Farley et al. 2012, Farley et al. 2011b, Durchslag and Goswami 2008, Farley 2007), and that there is no emotional involvement between clients and the sex workers they hire (Farley et al. 2012, Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et

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<sup>36</sup> ‘Bottoming’ refers to receptive anal intercourse.

<sup>37</sup> Insertive anal intercourse poses a much lower potential risk of HIV transmission than receptive anal intercourse (“HIV Transmission Risk” 2013).

<sup>38</sup> Atchison, Vukmirovich, and Burnett (2015) found that 1.7% of clients refused to pay a sex worker for their services.

al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008). The men's stories of bad experiences call into question the trope that sex workers are always the victims, and clients are always the victimizers.

It is interesting to note that these risks are also navigated by sex workers and the risk management techniques employed by the clients are often identical or similar to those of sex workers. For example, sex workers mitigate security risks by screening potential clients, often intuitively (Krüsi et al. 2014, SWUAV et al. 2014, Lewis and Shaver 2006), requiring personal information from their clients (Lewis and Shaver 2006), maintaining regular clients (Bruckert and Chabot 2010), working for a third party (Bruckert and Law 2014, Gillies 2013), working from a secure indoor location (Lewis and Shaver 2006), letting someone know where they are (Lewis and Shaver 2006), and consulting bad date lists (Krüsi et al. 2014, Lewis and Shaver 2006). In addition, sex workers use code language to mitigate legal risks (Bruckert and Chabot 2010), and use condoms to reduce the risk of contracting an STI (Minichiello et al. 2000, Browne and Minichiello 1995). Although not fully explored, these findings suggest that, like sex workers, criminalization and stigma increase clients' vulnerability to victimization.

## Chapter Six

# Stigma, Stereotypes, Social Judgment, and Identity Management

People who purchase sexual services and men who have sex with men are stigmatized populations, and the men in this research are therefore doubly stigmatized. While all participants in the sex industry (i.e. sex workers, clients, and third parties) experience stigma, historically, sex workers were stigmatized and men who purchased their services were not (Egan 2006). However, as was previously noted, the ‘taint’ of sex work is shifting from the seller to the buyer (Bernstein 2007).

Today, prohibitionist feminists hold the view that sex work is male violence against women and they perpetuate a gendered discourse about sex workers and their clients in which sex workers are women and victims, and clients are men and exploiters/abusers. While men who hire men escorts may be further stigmatized by the fact that they have sex with men, their experiences of stigma may be lessened by the fact that they are able to distance themselves from prohibitionist feminist discourses that demonize the clients of sex workers.

Stigmatic assumptions about clients, pivoting on notions of risk, are embedded in the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* and encoded in the law that

criminalizes purchasing a sexual service (CC s. 286.1). In other words, this is an example of structural stigma (Hannem 2013). In this thesis, however, while mindful that all social interactions are conditioned by context, my focus is on the meaning clients ascribe to their relationships.

As we saw in the introduction, prevailing narratives construct the clients of sex workers as 'dangerous men', 'perverts', and 'pathetic losers'. The men who participated in this research were aware of the stigma against sex workers and their clients. For example, Peter had heard negative comments indirectly: *“This person hired an escort. It’s really shameful. It’s disgusting.”* In the past and without the knowledge that Raymond hired escorts, people with whom he had relationships *“have said things that have indicated that they think prostitution is immoral.”* In this chapter, I examine how the participants would manage their public identity, their experiences of social judgment, and the ways in which they negotiate dominant narratives in terms of their private identity. I conclude with a reflection on the ways the clients (ironically) reproduce and reify the very stereotypes they are challenging.

### **Public Identity**

Stigma is interactionally realized, and stigmatized people may therefore be either discredited or discreditable. A discredited person “assume[s] his differentness is known about already or is evident on the spot” whereas the discreditable person assumes that their differentness is “neither known about by those present nor immediately perceivable by them” (Goffman 1963, p. 4). The clients of escorts are therefore discreditable. When interacting with others, the discredited must negotiate tension while the discreditable are required to manage information that could reveal their stigmatized status. The

discreditable person must decide “to display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where” (Goffman 1963, p. 42).

While “where noone knows about the stigma and where everyone knows” are two extremes, Goffman (1963) wrote that these polar opposites “fail to cover a great range of cases” (p. 73). Moreover, “because of the great rewards in being considered normal, almost all persons who are in a position to pass will do so on some occasion by intent” (Goffman 1963, p. 74).

All participants reported that they would protect their public identity and avoid social judgment by not revealing to (some or all) others that they hired escorts, which Goffman (1963) referred to as “passing” (p. 48), and by engaging in selective disclosure. We see this range in the research, indeed Brad alone indicated that “*no one knows,*” while the others engaged in various levels of selective disclosure. Bernard would generally not disclose to even his close friends that he hired escorts although “*one or two, I have admitted to.*” Peter told us:

*There’s a time and a place. I’m not going to go to work and say ‘Hey. I hired an escort last night. It was great’. That’s not acceptable. But I do talk to my best friend. I won’t hide it from people who can handle it. I don’t think I’d tell my parents. I’ve told my sister a few times. She doesn’t judge me.*

Joshua said “*my other half knows, all my friends know.*”

Goffman’s (1963) claim that “the first set of sympathetic others is of course those who share his stigma” (p. 20) was not uniformly the case in this study. Participants described that contact with other men who hire escorts was often limited to online

exchanges with anonymous men with whom they would share information on which escorts to hire, and who to avoid, although Raymond, Jack, and Peter would discuss their experiences with friends who also hired. Raymond, who was introduced to hiring escorts by a friend and sexual partner, continued to discuss his experiences with this friend.

In addition to selective disclosure, Jack and Jerry reported choosing to speak only of the good experiences. Jack explained that he would talk about *“how much it was worth it, but I won’t go into a lot of details. I tend to keep it private, just to avoid questions and negative comments.”* Jerry would discuss his experiences with escorts with a couple very close friends *“when the person was outstanding. I would tell them that I met up with a really nice person, that my sexual needs were met, on a conversation piece they met my needs, and they were very attractive.”* His good experiences would elicit positive comments: *“Oh yeah? That’s great! They may then relay something similar, not necessarily an escort, but some of their recent encounters. They may even ask me a few more questions as to what made the person special.”* This information management strategy echoes Egan’s (2006) finding that erotic dancers may keep “bad nights” to themselves in order to avoid social judgment and “fueling the fire” of radical feminist notions that sex work is ‘damaging’ to women (p. 84).

The choice to ‘pass’, and thereby avoid social judgment, will constrain options as one must avoid engaging in activities that could result in being discredited. We saw this when Bernard did not contact the police when an escort robbed him because *“my ex-wife is so spiteful. She will use anything and everything that she can possibly find against me. As a person with a disability, I already have enough social barriers in my*

*life.*” Jack restricted his hiring of escorts to when he was out of town: “*I tend to use the service more when I’m traveling so I’m not running into people I might know.*” Perhaps it is not surprising that only two participants noted constraints – after all, most participants would hire an escort only a few times a year, and their stigmatized identity related “to matters which cannot be appropriately divulged to strangers” or that may be “more personal than the relationship really warrants” (Goffman 1963, pp. 74-5). People generally only discuss their sexual activities with intimates, whether the activities are stigmatized or not.

### Experiences of Social Judgment

While selectively disclosing to others that they would hire escorts shielded participants from some social judgment, almost all reported an experience of direct or transferred stigma (Hannem 2012), and many participants spoke of experiences of direct stigma when they confided in their friends. Raymond explained that his friends’ concerns were informed by their perceptions of the risks associated with hiring an escort:

*I have told people that I have done it and had some incredibly negative reactions. ‘Why in the hell are you paying a prostitute? You’re not ugly. Don’t you know about sexually transmitted diseases? Don’t you know you can be robbed? Don’t you know the cops are aware of this? Don’t you know that it’s exploitative?’*

By contrast, most other participants described judgment that stemmed from the stereotype that the clients of escorts are ‘pathetic losers’ – a framing that is less obviously gendered than the ‘dangerous predators’ discourse. Joshua (age 62) had

friends who were mostly university-aged, who would tease him “*that I’m old, I have to pay for it. They don’t get it. It’s not true, in fact.*” Simon also encountered similar judgments from his friends: “*You’re good-looking. You’re cute. You’re not old. You’re not fat. Why are you doing that? You can get it for free. What’s the matter with you? Are you doing drugs? What’s the matter with your penis? Is it too small you gotta pay for it?*”

Raymond and Jack reflected on transferred stigma (Hannem 2012) – the process by which the stigma against sex workers taints them as a client. Hannem (2012) further develops Goffman's concept of "courtesy stigma"<sup>39</sup> in what she defines as "transferred stigma." In an analysis of the transferred stigma experienced by family members of prisoners, she wrote:

In this light, we can think of transferred stigma as both a function of social stereotype and judgment of the moral characteristics of those who associate with criminals. More than a mere "courtesy stigma," – as Goffman (1963a) imagined it (replicated and diminished version of the original stigma that tainted the convicted family member), transferred stigma takes on a life of its own and is transformed in its particular constellation to reflect moral judgement of the actions and character of the family member. The individual is viewed not merely as "the wife of a convicted criminal," but as the *kind of woman* who would choose to maintain a relationship with a convicted

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<sup>39</sup> Goffman (1963) wrote that “[a] second type of wise person is the individual who is related through the social structure to a stigmatized individual” although these individuals are “obliged to share some of the discredit of the stigmatized person,” which he calls “courtesy stigma” (p. 30). However, unlike Hannem (2012), he argues that “[T]he problems faced by the stigmatized persons spread out in waves, but of diminishing intensity” (Goffman 1963, p. 30).

criminal, with all of the associated negative stereotypes and characteristics that the status entails (p. 115, italics in original).

According to Raymond, the stigma directed towards people who hire escorts is *“guilt by association, not because they necessarily think anything about you as the service user, but because they think the service provider is this untouchable and diseased thing. Anyone who has any sort of voluntary contact with them has been diminished by the experience.”* Jack said much the same thing: *“They just associate it with being dirty. You’re wasting your money. You’re hanging out with diseased people. You don’t need to do this. You can do better. You should think more of yourself. You’re hiring a whore.”*

### Stigma in the Gay Community

There is a long and vibrant history of LGBTQ activism for rights centering on the recognition of diverse sexualities (Kinsman and Gentile 2010). Moreover, the LGBTQ community, a population that continues to be marginalized and discriminated against (protective and rights legislation notwithstanding) on the basis of sexuality, has been a staunch ally to sex workers in the recent past.<sup>40</sup> Marlowe (1997) wrote that gay men have a different relationship to sex work than heterosexual men because “many gay men have learned not only to accept but also take pride in sexual deviance” (p. 141). In this context, one might expect the response to sex workers and their clients to be less judgmental. Indeed, and in sharp contrast to some of the stories they told, the participants reported that perceptions of the sex industry within the gay community are quite distinct from mainstream society and, with the exception of Jerry, participants

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<sup>40</sup> The gay community has been a strong ally to POWER Ottawa, and POWER’s presence is welcomed each year in the Pride Parade. In 2012, Sex Professionals of Canada was invited to march in the Toronto Pride Parade with the Grand Marshalls.

indicated that there is little or no stigma in the gay community towards those who purchase sexual services. Brad indicated *“I don’t think there is social judgment in the gay community. I think it’s in our culture.”* He further explained that many older gay men are attracted to younger men, and therefore hiring an escort is *“not looked down on because it’s almost normal. It’s almost expected as you get a little bit older.”* Joshua told us *“there’s not a stigma attached to it in the circles I run in. Mind you, that’s a gay friendship circle and attitudes there are a whole lot more open than is my experience in terms of straight collections of people.”*

Although it is unclear why this might be the case, Jerry, who was married to a woman and was the only participant to identify as bisexual, indicated that he experienced more judgment in the gay community: *“If you go into some of the gay sites looking for an escort, there seems to be a cattiness about it. You can see the banter going on in the chat, for example, ‘You must be really desperate. You must be ugly in order to have to pay for sex.’”* In discussing his experiences with heterosexual men, Jerry reported *“there doesn’t seem to be that kind of prejudice or judgmental feeling, if you’re going to see a gal. You don’t say you’re seeing a guy, that’s for sure! [laugh] That’s even worse!”*

While the men in this research overwhelmingly reported that there is less stigma in the gay community (as opposed to heteronormative society) towards sex work, Walby (2012) (see also Bruckert and Chabot 2010) found that “self-identified gay escorts do experience stereotyping by other gay men” and that some escorts “describe being rejected by men in the dating scene because of their work” (p. 132), suggesting that sex workers may experience stigma very differently in the gay community as compared with

their clients. One participant in Walby's (2012) research noted, "gays can be just as discriminatory as other people, if not worse" (p. 132).

### The Risk of Outing

Goffman (1963) wrote that "it is assumed that he [the discreditable who chooses to pass] must necessarily pay a great psychological price, a very high level of anxiety, in living a life that can be collapsed at any moment," although he hypothesized that a "close study of passers would show that this anxiety is not always found and that here our folk conceptions of human nature can be seriously misleading" (p. 87). Although the clients were aware of the stereotypes, had experienced social judgment following disclosure (that they hired escorts), and were mindful that they risked being 'outed',<sup>41</sup> most took a decidedly measured approach assuming that, in spite of taking the precaution to tell no one about hiring escorts: *"I don't think they would judge me too much [if they found out]"* (Brad). Steve explained, *"I can see someone who may have a bit of a public image to maintain being very concerned about being exposed as paying for sex at some point, but my name isn't known anywhere and there are not a whole lot of people who would recognize me walking down the street."* In contrast to the other men, Raymond was particularly "stigma conscious" (Pinal 2004) and expected that if it were revealed that he hired escorts to those he had *"reasonably good relationships with [...] they would definitely look at me very differently and have negative things to say about that."*

A few participants described a hierarchy of stigmas and how the nature of stigma can change over time. While being 'outed' as a client was not a preoccupation for Jim,

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<sup>41</sup> Atchison (2010) and Jones (2013) also identified the risk of 'outing'.

Bernard, and Brad, the disclosure of other (discreditable) identities was. Brad, who was the only participant who would not disclose to anyone that he hired escorts, noted that his partner, who was aware of his relationship with his favourite escort, “*doesn’t necessarily know this person’s commercial or that he does drugs. [Interviewer: Which part would disappoint Greg?] The drug.*” Bernard was “*closeted with a lot of people*” not just in terms of hiring escorts, but in terms of his sexual identity. He explained, “*if I’m downtown, I’ll pick up Xtra!<sup>42</sup> the odd time, but I also have a son that comes here on a regular basis, so it’s not something that I advertise or keep around the house. There are some things that are better left unsaid.*” For Jim (age 75), who was in the British army and indicated that at that time homosexuality was taboo, his fear of being ‘outed’ as a client in his early days hiring escorts was also the fear that he would be identified as gay: “*I wasn’t completely ‘out’ in those days, so I was always a little concerned.*” Although now that around thirty years have passed and he is retired, he said “*there’s a few straight-laced people who say it shouldn’t be allowed. In this day in age I think most people are becoming more relaxed about it.*”

### **Private Identity**

Negotiations around private identity revealed a tension. On the one hand, most participants indicated that they “*don’t care*” (Joshua, Steve, Peter) about the stigma of purchasing sexual services and that they are “*okay with this*” (Peter) (i.e. their choice to hire escorts). Peter indicated “*if they want to judge me for it, I’m not sure I care so much. As long as it’s two consenting parties, I’m fine with that. I don’t care what people think.*” While Jack confessed that when he experienced social judgment, he sometimes

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<sup>42</sup> Daily Xtra! publishes news of interest to gay and lesbian people (“About Daily Xtra” 2015) and Bernard would hire escorts who advertised in this publication.

felt “*a little guilty about it,*” he declared that he does not “*need anyone else’s approval,*” and Jerry said “*I don’t have any guilt over doing it.*” Only Bernard expressed that his involvement in the sex industry was “*wrong:*” “*I guess I feel it’s wrong but I’ve grown to accept it as a reality of life.*”

On the other hand, in spite of maintaining that they “*don’t see a problem*” (Jack) with themselves hiring an escort, examination of the data indicates that clients nonetheless negotiate private identity in the face of prevailing narratives that define them as ‘predators’ (Farley et al. 2012, Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Durchslag and Goswami 2008, Farley 2007), ‘perverts’ (Janus and Puzic 2014), and ‘pathetic losers’ (Joseph and Black 2012, Egan 2006). Peter (age 41) was concerned “*I don’t want to be the old troll guy hiring young guys for sex.*” The clients navigated “*all these negative things they put in your head*” (Jack) with a counter-narrative that exceptionalizes themselves as clients, presents the exchange as being mutually enjoyable, and frames the escorts they hire as ‘not desperate’.

### Counter-Narratives

Goffman (1963) identifies sets of people who are often sympathetic to the stigmatized, the first set being others who share in the same stigma. When a person learns they are stigmatized, they necessarily enter into a new relationship with others who share the same stigma and they may learn that the stigmatized group is “quite like ordinary human beings” (Goffman 1963, p. 39). While we would therefore expect that the clients of escorts would be sympathetic to other clients who share their stigma, research suggests that this may not be the case (Jones 2013, Egan 2006). However, we can consider that Goffman (1963) later states “the stigmatized individual exhibits a

tendency to stratify his 'own' according to the degree to which their stigma is apparent and obtrusive. He can then take up in regard to those who are more evidently stigmatized than himself the attitudes the normals take to him" (p. 107).

The most common way in which the clients would navigate stigma in terms of their private identity was to highlight positive characteristics of themselves by constructing a 'straw' client (Bruckert 2002) against which they emerge as 'exceptional'.<sup>43</sup> In the process, they drew upon the 'truth' spoken by the sex workers they hired. Joshua, who would meet an escort at a coffee shop prior to an encounter, said "*they find me unusual because I treat them differently from how many of the other clients do.*" Brad (age 43) was under the impression that escorts' general clientele is an older crowd, and explained that an escort he would hire regularly told him "*I like kissing you because I don't kiss these old men. It's nice not having sex with an old man.*"

The men spoke critically of how other clients would behave in the company of escorts, explaining that as clients, they are 'more desirable'. Jack imagined that escorts "*run into clients that are very unattractive and maybe their clients assault them.*" Joshua juxtaposed himself against the 'straw' client he constructed when he said:

*I've heard over the years from escorts that tricks want to cheap them out of most of the money they're owed. I would never do that. It's too demeaning. I have sometimes given guys more than they ask for and they look at me like I'm crazy. They're pretty much universally startled. Tipping hasn't been common in their experience.*

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<sup>43</sup> Egan (2006) found in her research of regular clients of "exotic dancers" that they often perceived themselves to be unique and different from other customers, who they would describe as "perverts," "jerks," and "asshole customers" (p. 132).

Several participants were critical of other clients for “*not doing it the right way, or hiring the wrong people*” (Jack) and for taking risks they would not themselves take. Jack, who was careful to not become emotionally attached to escorts, believed “*some people get an illusion in their mind that if they pay the escort often enough, something more meaningful will come out of it and they get into trouble with that.*” Raymond asserted “*I know men who don’t really screen their prostitutes as well as I do in terms of whether they are creeps, whether they are likely to be robbed, whether the guy is going to rough them up a bit, or try and extort money from them. I screen as well as I possibly can on that.*”

As we saw in Chapter 4, “Setting the Stage: The Commercial Sexual Exchange,” the men expressed that, for them, a mutually enjoyable experience was key to a satisfying encounter, a fact they drew upon when negotiating stigma. In challenging the discourse that clients are exploiting the escorts they hire, the participants indicated that they would only participate in activities which were enjoyable for both parties. Raymond reported:

*When contacting an escort for the first time, I ask them ‘what do you do?’  
Many prostitutes offer very different things, and some won’t do some things,  
and that’s fine. I don’t want to push anybody’s boundaries and say ‘okay you  
only offer this, but I want this, so if I pony up more money, will you do this?’  
That’s not what I’m interested in.*

If Peter would get “*an inkling or a feeling that the other person’s not enjoying themselves*” he would end the session: “*I’ll just say ‘I don’t think this is working out’, I’ll give them the money and just send them off.*” He explained, “*I don’t want people to do*

*something, especially sexually, that they don't want to do. It's just not the way I am."*

Simon characterized himself as 'not the typical client' when he indicated "*a lot of times I wouldn't even have sex because it became very clear that they were doing this because of an addiction. A lot of people wouldn't care, but I'm a compassionate guy. I pay them anyway and let them go because I just felt – I didn't say anything, but I felt badly.*"

Furthermore, the men framed the escorts they would hire as 'not desperate'. Many participants echoed Jack's experience that people associate escorts with "*street walkers, hustlers, really hardcore types, and drug users*" when "*that's not necessarily what it's all about.*" Raymond said:

*I understand that there are sex trade workers who are exploited, who are put at risk, who are in danger, and who do not enjoy what they are doing. I don't participate in that end of it. I don't feel that I'm exploiting anybody or that I'm causing anyone harm, but that's very probably due to the people that I select to see. There's one guy who I've hired several times who has a standard job, but this is his money, and he's saving to buy a home. He's building his down payment on his house by being a prostitute. I think that's a fantastic thing for him to do.*

Joshua would avoid hiring escorts who he suspected may be drug users and "*have no other choice*" or who were "*down in the dumps*": "*I respect people who do it well. Maybe the types who are doing it to go through school, just a little while to save up money, to buy something, or to pay to renovate their house. I don't mind helping somebody like that.*"

Somewhat surprisingly, given the overtly gendered nature of prevailing discourses about men who purchase sexual services, only Raymond navigated stigmatic assumptions by exceptionalizing men escorts:

*The world of male prostitutes and the world of female prostitutes are vastly different. There's a difference between men and women in general. Men tend to be more exploitative of women due to socialization. That power dynamic shows up in every aspect of our lives, not just in prostitution. Men exploit women. Men have power over women. Men grab young women from all over the world and force them to be prostitutes. I'm sure it happens to young boys as well." He qualified: "The prostitutes I'm hiring are men; they're not boys."*

## **Reflections**

The current research suggests that clients of men sex workers are aware of dominant narratives that construct them as 'predators', 'perverts', and 'pathetic losers', and that they manage their public identity by "passing" (Goffman 1963) and through selective disclosure. Their choice to disclose would sometimes result in social judgment, although the men indicated that this is much less likely in the gay community. While they acknowledged the risk of 'outing', it was not a grave concern.

As explored above, the clients navigated stigma in terms of their private identity primarily by constructing a 'straw' client against which they would exceptionalize themselves. Hannem and Bruckert (2012) observed that a "common tactic employed by marginalized persons as a means of protecting their identity is to attempt to separate themselves from existing stereotypes by reifying and supporting the dominant discourse while emphasizing their own difference" (p. 177) and that "personal struggles of stigma

avoidance and identity management fail to challenge the larger stigmatizing discourses and therefore tend to be counter-productive for the purposes of collective struggle” (p. 178). The men’s strategy of constructing a ‘straw’ client for the purpose of exceptionalizing themselves may distance themselves from the stigma, but it does not serve to unravel (and actually reinforces) the stigma against men who purchase sexual services. According to Hannem and Bruckert (2012), “instead of having the desired effect of normalizing or redeeming the discredited individual in the eyes of others, intra-group stigmatization merely serves to reinforce existing stereotypes and perpetuate marginalization of the group as a whole” (p. 178). This has been observed among families of prisoners (Hannem 2012), women prisoners who self-injure (Kilty 2012), and erotic dancers (Bruckert 2002), and the current research suggests this may also be prevalent among men who hire sex workers.

# Chapter Seven

## Conclusion

This thesis contributes to the literature that challenges prevailing narratives about men who purchase sexual services (Farley et al. 2012, Farley et al. 2011a, Farley et al. 2011b, Macleod et al. 2008, Farley 2007, Durchslag and Goswami 2008). It also demonstrates the diversity of clients, and speaks to the complexity of relationships between sex workers and their clients. In this final chapter, I pull together some of my findings to draw attention to the relationship between sex workers' and clients' experiences of criminalization and stigma, highlight the ways in which gender and sexual identity may condition clients' experiences of hiring sex workers, and suggest future areas of inquiry.

My findings suggest that criminalization and stigma may condition clients' experiences hiring escorts in ways that are very similar to those experienced by sex workers. While prevailing narratives frame sex workers as being 'at risk' and clients as 'risky', my findings demonstrate that the men clients of men escorts also face risks in addition to those relating to sexual health that dominate the literature. As we have seen, other categories of risk identified by the men include financial, security, legal, emotional

well-being, and 'outing'. Like sex workers, clients may be vulnerable to predators that target them specifically because criminalization and stigma undermine their ability to access criminal justice redress, rendering them 'easy targets'. Clients manage these risks in ways that echo those of sex workers, such as using condoms, screening before an encounter, and engaging in selective disclosure.

Historically, sex workers have been stigmatized and their clients have not. This is changing and the stigma of sex work is shifting from the seller to the buyer (Bernstein 2007). As a result, clients find themselves, like sex workers, negotiating their public and private identities in the face of stigmatizing stereotypes and narratives. My findings suggest that like sex workers (Bruckert 2002), clients resist prevailing narratives by constructing a 'straw' client against which they can exceptionalize themselves. This personal strategy of stigma avoidance, while enabling an individual to distance themselves from the stigma, does not serve to challenge and actually reinforces dominant narratives.

The findings in this thesis also suggest that gender and sexual identity may shape clients' experiences hiring escorts. In Chapter 4, "Setting the Stage: The Commercial Sexual Exchange," we saw that, unlike the clients of women sex workers, the men in this research, with the exception of Jim, did not interpret their experiences of mutual pleasure or an emotional connection with escorts as being 'unique' or 'special', assuming that the escorts they hired experienced this sort of connection with other clients. We can hypothesize that this may relate to sexual scripts that dictate that women's sexual desires are 'less than' those of men (and therefore intimacy will only be experienced with a select few) and/or because monogamy is interpreted differently in

the gay community than it is in heteronormative society. Interestingly, the men's experiences of social judgment appear to be rooted not from the discourse that men who hire sex workers are exploiters and abusers, but from the (less overtly) gendered framing that they are 'pathetic losers'.

### Directions for Future Research

The men's assertion that there is little or no stigma towards hiring an escort in the gay community stands in sharp contrast to Walby's (2012) (see also Bruckert and Chabot 2010) research that found that male sex workers experience (sometimes amplified) stigma in the gay community. More research is needed to discern how stigma against sex work is experienced in the gay community, how gender shapes clients' experiences hiring sex workers, and clients' relationships with the sex workers they hire.

Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 1, "The Literature on the Clients of Sex Workers: Exploiters? Deviants? Vectors of Disease? Service Consumers?" more research is needed that interviews the men clients of men sex workers directly, rather than gathering information from sex workers about their clients. In particular, research that examines a wide range of clients including those (absent in this study, see Chapter 3, "Methods and Methodology") who may have brief, impersonal sexual experiences with escorts, and men who identify or who live and present as heterosexual. Further inquiry is required to understand these men's experiences hiring escorts. Finally, a research with a more robust sample of clients would allow the findings of the current study to be assessed and further developed, in particular, it would be important to attend to issues of racialization to unpack its impact on the men who hire men escorts.

Finally, the interviews were conducted in 2008-9, prior to the introduction of the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*, which criminalized, among other things, the purchase of a sexual service (CC s. 286.1). Evidently, research is needed that explores clients' experiences hiring sex workers in the face of the new legislative framework which defines them as 'predators' and 'perverts'. By inserting men sex workers and their clients into the discussion, we can begin to rethink gendered narratives about sex work, and challenge the ways in which these assumptions are embedded in law.

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## Appendix A



Carleton University  
Research Ethics Office  
Research Ethics Board  
511 Tory, 1125 Colonel By Drive  
Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6 Canada  
Tel: 613-520-2517, ethics@carleton.ca

### Ethics Clearance Form – New Clearance (Secondary Use of Data)

This is to certify that the Carleton University Research Ethics Board has examined the application for ethical clearance. The REB found the research project to meet appropriate ethical standards as outlined in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human, 2nd edition*, and the *Carleton University Policies and Procedures for the Ethical Conduct of Research*.

**Date of Clearance:** February 26, 2015

**Researcher:** Emily Symons (Student Research: Master's Student)

**Department:** Sociology and Anthropology

**University:** Carleton University

**Research Supervisor (if applicable):** Prof. Chris Bruckert and Prof. Aaron Doyle

**Project Number:** 102698

**Alternate File Number (if applicable):**

**Project Title:** Unmasking the "John": Male Clients' Experiences of Paying Men for Sex

**Funder (if applicable):**

**Clearance Expires:** May 31, 2015

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#### All researchers are governed by the following conditions:

**Annual Status Report:** You are required to submit an Annual Status Report to either renew clearance or close the file. Failure to submit the Annual Status Report will result in the immediate suspension of the project. Funded projects will have accounts suspended until the report is submitted and approved.

**Changes to the project:** Any changes to the project must be submitted to the Carleton University Research Ethics Board for approval. All changes must be approved prior to the continuance of the research.

**Adverse events:** Should a participant suffer adversely from their participation in the project you are required to report the matter to the Carleton University Research Ethics Board. You must submit a written record of the event and indicate what steps you have taken to resolve the situation.

**Suspension or termination of clearance:** Failure to conduct the research in accordance with the principles of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, 2nd edition* and the *Carleton University Policies and Procedures for the Ethical Conduct of Research* may result in the suspension or termination of the research project.



**Louise Heslop**

Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board



**Andy Adler**

Vice-Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board

## Appendix B

### INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH CLIENTS

As I have already mentioned, as part of a research project that we are doing in collaboration with *Stella*, a sex worker organization in Montreal, we are conducting interviews with clients of escorts about different aspects of their experiences. We will first be focussing on the dimensions of intimacy and sexuality. After that we will be discussing other aspects of your experiences as a client of escorts and of other sex workers. This interview may touch on sensitive issues but I assure you that there are neither good nor bad responses to the questions. Moreover all of your comments will remain anonymous and confidential.

### PART I

#### SECTION 1: SEXUALITY AND INTIMACY

*[Note to interviewer: Here we start to explore personal intimacy, how does the person feel about their sexuality, how do they experience intimacy (both sexually and emotionally)]*

If it is alright with you we will start by examining, in a general way, how you understand and experience sexuality and intimacy.

*[If the person hesitates, add the following:]*

You can start wherever you wish

1.1 ... can you speak about the place or the role or the significance of sexuality in your life

*[if necessary]*

... I have the impression that we have covered that question

*[If yes]*

1.2 ... can you speak to the issue of intimacy in your life.....

If I not mistaken we have covered the question of sexuality and intimacy....

## **SECTION 2: EXPERIENCES AS A CLIENT**

### **General Experiences**

I would now like to turn to the different aspects of your experience as a client of escorts and of sex workers in general ...

*[If necessary add the following]*

- What place do your encounters with escorts occupy in your life?
- What place do your encounters with sex workers in general occupy in your life?

*[If necessary add the following]*

- What is the significance of these encounters?

### **Typical encounter with an escort**

A) Can you describe a typical encounter with an escort (when and where you meet?; how would you make contact?; what services do you request?; what does the encounter cost?; what is the typical course of events – what happens, how do you act, what do you normally do?)

B) We are also interested in knowing, according to you, what are the elements of a good encounter with an escort)

C) What are the skills, characteristics and qualities that you seek in a sex worker for the encounter to be considered good in your terms”?)

*We are interested in knowing:*

- *What do you look for in terms of physical appearance (i.e. age, sex, ethnicity, height, physical characteristics) in a sex worker?*
- *What do you look for in terms of personality and attitude in a sex worker?*
- *What do you find the most appealing in a sex worker?*
- *What do you find the most unappealing in a sex worker?*

### **Relationships with escorts**

We would like to have general idea about your relationships with escorts. Could you please speak about your experience in terms of the following ...

A) Could you describe the different types of relationships you have had with escorts...

- Have you ever had an intimate relationship with an escort?
- Are your interactions with escorts satisfying? (Sexually? Socially? In some other way?)
- Do some escorts offer you: an attentive ear? A friendly relationship? An emotional attachment? A therapeutic relationship? Are these important to you?

B) How are your relationships with escorts, or with other sex workers, different or similar to other relationships in your life?

### **The risks and their implications**

A) Do you consider there to be risks associated with using the services of an escort (such as, for example, in terms of security (or safety); health; legally; your psychological well being, or others)? Could you please speak to your experience of these elements...

B) We would now like to know, more specifically, if you take measures to protect yourself against, or to minimize, these risks? Could you explain and/or give examples.....

C) In spite of these precautions, have you ever had problems as a client of an escort (such as, for example, in terms of security (or safety?); health; legally; your psychological well being, or others)?

D) Do you think that the laws or policies might have an impact at this level?...

### **Relationship to the industry**

A) Could you please describe your history as a client of sexual services in general? (when, for what reason, types of services sought, frequency, changes in the types of services, types de services, regular use of one agency or worker etc.)

B) Specifically, we are also interested in your relationship to escort agencies...

- What so you seek in an establishment or agency?  
What do you find the most attractive?  
What do you find the most unappealing?
- Can you please speak to your relationship with other personnel in the agency (receptionist; managers, others)...

C) How would you describe your relationships with other clients? (Are you in contact in one way or another?)

### **SECTION 3: SOCIAL JUDGEMENT OF THE SEX INDUSTRY**

A) Do you speak about your experiences with escorts with other people?

B) Do you think that the clients of sexual services face prejudice?

If yes, how?

If not, why not?

Could you please elaborate based on your experiences?

### **SECTION 4: GENERAL INFORMATION**

How old are you?

Are you married or living common-law?

If yes, since when?

Do you have children?

If yes, do they live with you?

Do you consider yourself to be hetero-sexual? Homosexual? Bisexual? Transsexual?

Are you a member of an ethnic minority?

If yes, explain.

Under what pseudonym would you like to be identified in the research?

### **SECTION 5: INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEW AND THE RESEARCH**

Did the interview raise any questions about the laws, policies or regulations that surround your experiences as a client of escorts or other sex workers?

Would you like to receive additional information about the laws or regulations or about any other aspect of the work that we discussed in the interview?

Why did you participate in the research?

Do you have anything to add?

Would you like to have access to the transcript of the interview?

- If yes, would you please write your email or postal address, so that we can forward it to you

**END OF INTERVIEW**

## Appendix C

### List of Codes

1. Why see an escort
2. Compared to hook-up
3. Gay identity, community, culture
4. Place in life
5. Knowledge of the law
6. Discourse of helping
7. Costs
8. Relationships to escorts
9. Value assessments
10. History as a client
11. What looking for in an escort
12. Intimacy
13. Sexuality
14. Difference between intimacy and sexuality
15. Classism
16. Racism
17. Risks/security
18. Risks/bad experiences
19. Risks/emotional well-being
20. Risks/economic
21. Risks/legal
22. Risks/sexual health
23. The encounter/disguising the market transaction
24. The encounter/regular vs. variety
25. The encounter/expectations of the encounter
26. The encounter/good encounter
27. The encounter/bad experiences
28. The encounter/setting up
29. The encounter/description
30. Perceptions of/self as client
31. Perceptions of/other clients
32. Perceptions of/women sex workers
33. Perceptions of/good or bad reasons to do sex work
34. Perceptions of/third parties
35. Perceptions of/escorts
36. Perceptions of/other sex workers
37. Stigma/experiences of social judgment
38. Stigma/who do they tell?
39. Stigma/personal identity management
40. Stigma/public identity
41. Stigma/perceptions of stigma